

What's Going On Here?

This is the Fighting Withdrawal Example of Play (XOP). The Basic Infantry Example of Play has always been much-appreciated by ASL Newbies, so I figured it was time to lay off the advanced subjects like Night and PTO and get back to basics. Since Fighting Withdrawal is the first scenario in Beyond Valor, it's often the first scenario a new ASL'er will play, so FW seemed like a good scenario to choose.

This XOP will be unlike the others in that it'll be more like an extended Series Replay. We'll go into the strategies for both sides, then do the setups and have at it for a few player turns. We'll try to explain the how's and why's of what we did and didn't do, how we feel about what's happening on the board, etc. This "peeking into our brains" is something that hardcopy Series Replays don't have the space to accommodate, but on the Net, we've got all the room in the world.

I say "we" because this time out I'll be joined by John Slotwinski, erstwhile Maryland grognard-wanna-be and winner of the 1998 Winter Offensive tournament. John's not up there in the pantheon of Great ASL Players, but then again neither am I, and he's at least got a major tourney win under his belt while I got approximately Bupkus.

Like I said, instead of the hand-holding that you get in your normal XOP, this time John and I are going tooth-and-nail. We're gonna make mistakes and do things badly, but not by choice - we're both gonna be trying to WIN, baby. Along the way, you'll probably pick up a lot of foul language and of bad sportsmanship, for which we apologize in advance.

As with previous XOP's, we greatly appreciate feedback, both to correct outright mistakes and to suggest improvements. So please, speak up if you see a mistake or something that can be improved or commented on. Particularly if you see some good tactical advice that should be passed on. Send feedback to me at tqr@mindspring.com or John at jslotwinsk@aol.com

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Thanks, and enjoy!

Tom Repetti
John Slotwinski

To kick this off, it might help to read something I posted to the ASL list a while back, titled:

How Do I Start?

Slumming around the VASL scenario rooms, I've run across a few newbies who expressed something I had forgotten about: Fear and Loathing in the Setup. You just don't know where to start. That's OK, it's fully understandable. There's just too much stuff floating around in your head for you to make sense of it all. To help you out, here are The Things To Do, in roughly chronological order of importance:

- **Understand the Victory Conditions.** Gotta know what you're doing here. Note not only what you have to do, but what you don't have to do - you may have to take a certain building but the VC's may say nothing about how many Casualty Victory Points you're allowed to lose. Can the game end immediately upon some condition being met, or is victory determined at the end of the last turn?
- **Understand the Scenario Special Rules.** Most SSR's are pretty straightforward; some alter the game in significant ways.
- **Check the Terrain.** What month is it? Is Grain in season? Are Orchards? Is that Stream Dry, Shallow, or what?
- **Check the Environmental Conditions.** How's the Deep Snow gonna affect my infantry and vehicular movement? Is Smoke NA by virtue of Heavy Winds, Mud, Rain, or some other reason? Is already Raining or Snowing, or is it likely to start during the scenario? How's that going to affect my attack or defense? Is there any Wind which will cause Dispersed Smoke and affect how we place Infantry Smoke Grenades?
- **Understand the OB Schedules.** Where is my setup area? Where is my opponent's? Where is he coming in from offboard, and on what turn?

The above 5 items are pretty much the things that you want both sides to understand, and it really pays off to spend a minute before anybody sets up and just go over them together. "So I set up here and you come in from there and you gotta take that building. Grain's in season and so are Orchards; this SSR makes all buildings stone. The Mud means you can't fire smoke. Oh, and you get those reinforcements on turn 4." Simple, quick, and can save you both a big headache later. It's so grievous to spend hours at a scenario only to discover somebody's made a fatal error in his understanding of what's going on.

There are some items below that a real gentleman might want to share with his opponent; where you draw the line depends on how friendly the game is, who's involved, etc.

- **Read the Chapter H Notes on all your guns and vehicles.** Many scenarios need you to recognize what you have in terms of Special Ammo like HEAT, APCR, Smoke, etc. Most of the info you can get by turning over the counter, but some gems are hidden in chapter H. "Hey wow, this halftrack comes with an inherent HS passenger and a PSK!" Don't forget to read about your opponent's guns and vehicles too.

Note that you haven't set up a single unit yet, and you're not going to until you....

- **Grok The Essence.** The Victory Conditions are the "What", this section is the "How". Here's where you think about what tactics will and won't work in this situation. This is the part that comes with experience. Grognards simply have seen many game situations before, and it's easy for them to get a feel for what's probably going to happen in this scenario because they've seen other, similar, scenarios. They're not necessarily smarter than you; they've just seen more than you have.

As a newbie, don't dump on yourself just cuz you don't know what to think at this stage. Accept that there's a learning curve to be trodden and that you'll probably rack up a bunch of L's while

you trod. On a positive note, you'll hopefully have a ton of fun along the way.

You won't go badly wrong if you think about what you've got a lot of and what you don't have a lot of. Use what you've got. Being subtle is nice, but as Carl Fago (a Smart Guy) said, "Subtlety is overrated." You got a 9-2, an HMG, and a Level 2 Location with a nice wide view of the map? Hey, it's a no-brainer, baby! Are you badly outmatched in firepower? Then look for Skulking positions for your defenders. Got some of them nice 60mm MTR's with s7 on the back? Then plan on using Smoke to cover your advance. Got diddly-squat for Support Weapons but 18 447's? Start thinking Human Wave or the Massed Amoeba Attack style (where you've got a giant blob of MMC's, 1 per hex, gallumphing across the board as a single gigantic multihex firepower).

And don't forget to think about what your opponent's got as well. Try to figure out what part of his OB he'll be maximizing, and think about how you're going to respond to that. Basically, how are you going to minimize his advantages? If your opponent has tons of armor, you need to figure he'll be looking for OVR and Bounding MG Fire opportunities against your hapless infantrymen. If he's got 150mm OBA, you need to plan on spreading out your defense, and don't forget the possibility of his using Harassing Fire. Take Cover, boys!

It's a very rich game and the best scenarios offer both sides a good amount of tactical options. As you play more, you'll add more and more tricks to your Bag of Tricks.

At some point during the Grok Phase, you'll start putting counters on the map. Don't look now Bubba, but you've Started. And it wasn't that awful.

As an exercise, why don't you take the Fighting Withdrawal scenario card and go through steps 1-5 above. Then compare your notes with what we see are the salient points here.

- The VC's say that the Finns have to exit more VP than the Russians. Doing some difficult math, we note that 11 is more than 10, but 1 is also more than 0. This game could be an all-out dash for the exit or it could be a Stand-And-Hold proposition.
- It's September, so Orchards [B14.2] and Grain [B15.6] are in season.
- It's before October 1942, so the Russian can use a Commissar [A25.22].
- Russians have to set up between hexrows V and AA. He can set up two squads HIP if he wants, anywhere on the board (SSR 4).
- There are Blazes in U6 and G2 that are probably going to spread as the game continues, aided by the Dry EC and the Mild Breeze blowing to the East. The Blazes and the attendant Smoke are really gonna affect what the board looks like. It's gonna take longer to move through the Smoke since it costs an extra MF [A24.7] and it's gonna be harder to fire through because of the attendant +2/+3 Hindrance DRM [A24.2]. Also, since infantry can't enter Blaze hexes [B25.4], the Blazes will have a channeling effect on the attack - particularly those that develop from the G2 Blaze in the several turns that will pass before the game reaches that part of the board.
- The Russians are encumbered by Ammunition Shortage [A19.131], which means they can't lay Firelanes since their

MG's aren't Good Order [see the definition of "Good Order" in the Index]

OK, that's the basics. Now a word from Herr Slotwinski:

One thing that Tom didn't mention above: The Picking the Scenario Phase. In this case we've picked FW because every ASL player in the world gets it in Beyond Valor, and as such it receives an extraordinary amount of play. I also think that it is a good scenario for a beginner because it doesn't use vehicles or OBA or anything else funky. It is plain vanilla infantry ASL. Tuomo thinks that it is not a good choice for a beginner because it requires unusual tactics, like attacking without the benefit of smoke, and defending without the benefit of firelanes while performing the difficult-to-execute-correctly fighting withdrawal. Shrug. Not agreeing is one of the wonderful things about ASL! What will influence your decision in choosing a scenario to play? Well if it has rules you aren't comfortable with, like vehicles or OBA or Japanese, you probably won't play it. If it has SWs that are cool, like flame-throwers, you might be turned on! Victory conditions might also affect your decision. Some people can't stand the exit-VP scenarios, while others gush over casualty VP scenarios or whoever-controls-the-most-four-hex-wooden-buildings-wins scenarios. Some people are also keen on certain scenario genres, like early-war France 1940 scenarios, or late-war heavy metal scenarios. Different strokes for different folks.

Another factor in your choice might be scenario balance. Ahhh, scenario balance. True scenario balance is ASL Nirvana; a desired goal, but something that often remains out of reach. One great thing about scenario balance is that more often than not you won't find universal agreement on a particular scenario balance (there are exceptions of course.) When your opponent offers to give you the 'favored' side WITH the balance make sure you check him for a dorsal fin. If you're playing for fun, and are just looking for a fun game, then balance is not that important. If you play to win, or are in a tournament situation, balance might be more important.

How do you assess scenario balance, especially for a scenario you've never played? With some experience you might be able to look at a scenario card and get a rough idea of its balance. (Six partisan squads without SW against 10 Panthers?!?!?) But even experienced grognards will often disagree on a particular scenario's balance, even after playing it. One thing you can do is check the Internet Record or ROAR, to see what the documented record for a particular scenario is. These tools should be used for what they are however, not the final word on a scenario, but an indication of how much play it receives, and what the balance might be. Unknown factors like balance provisions, relative expertise of opponents, and unreported games can skew the records. So use these tools, but with a grain of salt or two. In my opinion playing a fun match against a good guy is more important than winning and/or balance.

OK, now it's time to Grok the Essence.

Russian Perspective - Tom Repetti

I have played Fighting Withdrawal twice before, and I've heard much discussion about it on the ASL Mailing List, so I've got some semi-experienced ideas about the scenario. Sneaking a peek

at what John's doing for the Finnish Perspective, I see that he's listing Strengths and Weaknesses, so I might as well do that too.

Russian Strengths: Commissar, Time/Space, HIP units, Sniper.

Since this scenario occurs before November 1942, the Russians can exchange one of the leaders in their OB for a Commissar [A25.22]. Commissars are lovely, especially on defense. I'll be able to have my broken squads rout back to Com. Denisova and she'll stand a good chance of rallying them in the next Rally Phase since Commissars ignore DM and raise the morale level (even broken morale) of units stacked with them by 1 [A25.221]. Very frustrating for the Finnish player to execute a nice attack, only to have Russian defenders self-break, rout back to the Commissar, rally next turn, and take up new defensive positions 3 hexes down the board.

Time and Space are Russian allies here because the Finns have a long way to go and not many turns to get there. Also, defending a 10-hex-wide corridor is relatively easy for this many squads. Heck, even broken Russian MMC's can channel the attack because the Finns can't enter the brokies' Locations [A4.14]. This is known as "blocking with your body"; we'll see it often here. Throw in the channeling effect of the Terrain Blazes and Smoke and there's really not a lot of room out there for the Finns to attack through. Often two or three Russian 447's will be enough to man the front lines while the rest of the Russians cover the flanks from positions in the rear.

I love HIP units, and the Russians get 2 of 'em. HIP units are a great way to keep your opponent off-balance; some opponents will become overly cautious for fear of running into your HIP trap. At the same time, HIP units provide you with a friendly morale boost as you dream of them getting those wonderful Point Blank shots with the -2 FFAM/FFMO DRM's.

A Sniper Activation Number of 7 would normally be huge in most scenarios, but it may not play such a huge role here because the Russians are going to be spending a lot of time falling back instead of firing at the Finns. Since the Finns won't be rolling Morale/Task Checks very often, they won't have a chance to activate the Russian Sniper. But hey, we'll take a SAN of 7 anyway :-)

Russian Weaknesses: Ammo Shortage, Outgunned, Balance

The Ammo Shortage is the biggest problem here, because it means that the Russian Machine Guns can't lay Firelanes since they're not Good Order [A9.22]. Firelanes are naturals in city fights like this because you can throw out a line of fire and dare the other guy to cross it. Sure, they won't stop an aggressive attacker, but every residual FP attack is worth its weight in gold.

Although the Russian defenders aren't hugely outnumbered here, they definitely are outgunned; the Finns can throw out ~120 FP (counting MG firepower extra to account for ROF) while the Russians can only field ~65 FP. When you factor in the spread-out nature of the Russian defense, it becomes clear that the Russians won't be putting most of the bullets in the air. Look for me to lay as much Residual FP as I can in order to get as many cheap and free fire attacks as possible.

The last weakness is Balance because it's so difficult to execute a Fighting Withdrawal over the course of 7 turns. More on that later.

Russian Strategy

First off, I'm not gonna try to stop the Finns cold. They simply have too much firepower and morale advantage for me to go toe-to-toe with them around the Y hexrow. We'd spend about 2 game turns Prep and Defensive Firing at each other, and by the end of it, I'd have a ton of broken units and he'd be able to squirt a few squads through my lines and on to the exit for an easy win. TAKE A HINT - the scenario is called "Fighting Withdrawal", not "Stand and Die".

OK, so I want to execute a Fighting Withdrawal, which is a tough thing to do. Some of my units will be standing and defending while others will be running back to the next defensive line. It's hard to balance just who's standing and who's running, but that's why ASL is so fun.

Since I'm going to be doing some Running Away, I've gotta watch out for John's Finns interdicting me - keeping my defenders from being able to fall back the way they'd like. There's a lot of open ground out there, and John would love to hit me while I fall back, either with an MMG firing from an upper building level or a lousy stinkin' halfsquad who managed to slip through the Russian lines. Therefore, I've got to think a turn or two in advance about where I want my units to run to, and I've got to keep myself between John's Finns and the exit line. If I let them slip behind me in force, I'll find myself unable to run and unable to hide from the beefy Finnish firepower.

As mentioned above, my Commissar will play a central role in the defense, anchoring one side or the other while keeping a fresh supply of bodies flowing to the front line. I've gotta protect Denisova and keep her in the game for as long as I can. (By the way, Denisova really was a woman.)

Finnish Perspective - John Slotwinski

My experiences with FW is limited to some solo playings, but with some good pre-game planning and thought we can overcome that limitation. I think that this particular scenario is perfect for the ASL newbie since it is an interesting tactical situation with infantry only. Fundamental and fun. Someone knew what he was doing when he designated this scenario ASL 1.

Note from Tom: I'll agree that it's nice that ASL 1 is infantry-only, but I actually think FW wasn't the best choice Avalon Hill could have made for the first scenario that most people will play. IMO, the Finns need to push, push, push up the board, almost regardless of losses, which certainly isn't in line with Standard Good ASL Play. They also have no Smoke-making ability at all, which doesn't give the new player an introduction to this most important part of the game. On the Russian side, it's unfortunate that they can't use Firelanes because of the Ammo Shortage - Firelanes are a hugely important ASL tool (especially in a city fight like this) and it's too bad the defenders here can't use 'em. Also, executing a Fighting Withdrawal is rather difficult, even for experienced players.

Before developing a scenario setup and/or strategy I always try to assess my side's strengths and weaknesses. Making the most of your strengths while minimizing your weaknesses goes a long way to increasing your chances for victory.

Finnish Strengths: Morale, Assault Fire, Finnish Characteristics

These Finnish 648s are excellent attackers with '8' morale, assault fire, and their inherent nationalistic characteristics [A25.7]. Their high morale is important in this scenario because we need to move fast and will often be required to cross open ground without the benefit of smoke. And assault fire is wonderful on the attack! Make sure you review A7.36 and understand how to calculate assault fire benefits correctly. In summary you do all of the halving and doubling of your FP first, and then add 1 FP and round up.

Some examples, using our assault-fire-capable Finnish 648s, firing during the advancing fire phase:

EX1: A Finnish 648 at two-hex range: 6 (halved for advancing fire) $= 3 + 1$ assault fire bonus $= 4$, round up to 4, so we use the 4 FP column on the IFT.

EX2: A pinned Finnish 648 at two-hex range: 6 (halved for advancing fire, halved again for pin) $= 1.5 + 1$ assault fire bonus $= 2.5$, round up to 3, so use the 2 FP column on the IFT.

EX3: A Finnish 648 at point-blank range: 6 (halved for advancing, doubled for PBF) $= 6 + 1$ assault fire bonus $= 7$, so we use the 6 FP column. Note that an American 747 would use the 8 FP column in this case!

EX4: A Finnish 648 at point-blank range using spraying fire: 6 (halved for advancing fire, halved for spraying fire, doubled for PBF) $= 3 + 1$ assault fire bonus $= 4$ round up to 4, so use the 4 FP column on the IFT.

EX5: A Finnish 648 at 5 hexes (long range): 6 (halved for advancing fire, halved for long range) $= 1.5$ so use the 1 FP column on the IFT. Note that in this case AF benefits do not apply, since they are NA at long range. Also, AF does not apply to units which are marked for Opp Fire.

So with our 6 FP assault firing Finns we'll normally use the 4 FP column for advancing fire in the 2 - 4 hex range, and 7 FP at point-blank range. That means when using assault fire these Finns have roughly the same firepower that the enemy Russian 447s have during Prep Fire!

Finally, being Finnish means you have some additional benefits that other nationalities don't, namely self-rallying, self-deploying (requires 1TC), and no cowering [A25.7] Being stealthy is also a good thing, and will come in handy if ambush drs are required. Always a good idea to read up on those unique nationality characteristics for your OB before you play a scenario, just like checking chapter H for vehicle notes.

Finnish Weaknesses: No smoke, VCs, numbers

Smoke is good. Always remember to use smoke, especially while attacking. Almost every OB in ASL has some kind of smoke at their disposal. Except for this one! No smoke for these Finns, so attacking across the open roads of board 21 is a lot more dangerous.

The victory conditions (VCs) are also tough and require us to traverse about 29 hexes of board in 7 turns, or roughly 4.1 hexes per turn. Now, if there were no enemy units on board that wouldn't be a problem but those Russians are not going to let us run down the board without opposition. And those Finns

which break will often be routing in the wrong direction before taking a rally-time-out, further slowing down progress.

Finally, our 16 Finn squads have to face roughly the same number of Russian squads (14), which doesn't bode well for the attacker.

Finnish Strategy

Keeping our strengths and weaknesses in mind, along with our understanding of the VCs, we can develop a basic attacking strategy before we even see our opponent's defense. In brief we need to move move move, trying to keep on schedule to exit the board. Prep fire will be rare, and we'll try to use advancing fire and defensive fire phases to hammer the Russian withdrawal. Depending on the defense, I might setup a squad/MMG in an overwatch position to opportunity-fire during my turns. Keeping with my strict timetable, I will avoid close combats whenever my odds are less than 2:1. I don't want to be tied up in a melee that might last several turns. Also, my high morale doesn't mean squat when I'm in CC. Keeping in mind the exit VP requirement I won't forget to take enemy units prisoner (since prisoners count double for exit VP, A20.1 and Q&A from the 89, 95W, and 96 Annuals), and as such I will be extremely hesitant to declare No Quarter (since NQ makes it harder to capture prisoners - instead of docilely surrendering, they'll Low Crawl to avoid capture, A20.3).

Like I said above, no smoke is a bad thing. So I'll try to give my opponent as many 1/2 FP shots as possible. This means dashing, and/or maintaining concealment whenever feasible. This would normally include assault moving in non-Open Ground hexes to maintain concealment, but with my time constraint I won't have the luxury of assault moving very often.

Another issue is Deployment. To deploy or not to deploy? And how much do you deploy? This issue is too large to cover completely, but I will briefly describe my perspective. (See the Defeat in Java Crossfire article in the 1995 ASL Annual for further discussion on this issue.) I like to deploy, especially on the attack. I tend to use my HSs aggressively as scouts and to restrict SFF from enemy units. I also use them to enter enemy concealed unit locations to strip concealment. Many people do not feel that HSs are worth firing at. These same people can suddenly find their defensive position compromised as two or three HSs find their way into the backfield, cutting off rout paths and causing general grief. There are other benefits as well. A KIA against a HS only eliminates a HS, but completely wipes out a squad. Deployment also means more targets for your opponent to fire against, and thus more decisions for him to make. This is especially effective when your HS quality is comparable to your enemy squad quality. An example of this is German 467 squads versus Partisan 337s. Deploy those Germans to increase your numbers, and you find that your HSs (247s) are roughly the equal of the Partisan squads (337s.) As the Finns, it is also easier to Deploy and Recombine, since you don't need a leader to do so.

Of course, as with most things there are some disadvantages with deployment. HS's do not have assault fire or smoke grenade capability (which our Finns don't have in this case anyway.) They also suffer from lower broken side morale than their full squad counterparts. Finally, in the grand scope of things you often give up some overall firepower when you deploy (i.e. a 648 has 6 FP while its two 248 HS's total only 4 FP.)

There's a final subtle point to be made. Sometimes it also pays to know your opponent. If you've played the same guy over and over again you probably have a good idea of his tendencies, and can design your attack or defense to take advantage of that. In a tournament situation or against a new opponent you can't always do this. In this case I've played Tom twice via e-mail, but that's not enough to pick up on any consistent tendencies. So no advantage to be gained in this case, but keep it in mind the next time you sit down to play your regular FTF opponent.

Note from Tom - IMO, you can pick up a lot from just one or two playings against an opponent. From even the two small games I've played against John, I know that he's Fully Aware of what he's doing. I'm gonna have to bring my "A Game" if I want to win - John's not likely to screw something up and hand me a victory.

Russian Setup - Tom

I'm gonna walk you through my thought process on how to do this setup. It won't apply to every scenario, it may not even work in this one, but at least you as a newbie will be able to see how a more experienced player organizes his thoughts about setting up a defense. Let me stress this here - this is NOT The Best Way to do this scenario. Plenty of Smart Reasonable People would set up the defense in a different way, a way that they're comfortable with. Hell, this isn't the same setup I'd have done last year or even last week. That's what makes the ASL world go round.

OK. Take out 14 447's and all the accompanying SMC's and SW. Hmm...

Are there funky things I should do to my OB, like:

Do I need to worry about Halfsquads, ie, should I Deploy some of my squads? No, these are Russians, so they can't Deploy unless they're Guarding Prisoners or some other funky situation [A25.2]. OK, cool. One less decision for me to make.

Should any of my Support Weapons start the game Dismantled? Sometimes you'll want to start some of your heavier SW in a dismantled state [A9.8], but these piggish Russian MMG's can't do so (the back of the MMG counter says "no dm"), so that's another decision we don't have to worry about.

Any other changes specific to my Nationality? Am I Russian? Is it before November 1942? YES and YES! Grab that Commissar! We could exchange the 8-1 leader for a 10-0 Commissar, or the 8-0 leader for a 9-0 Commissar. I tend to like the 8-0/9-0 exchange since an 8-1 leader is pretty useful. Wish we could get two Commissars, but you can't start the game with more Commissars than regular leaders, and we've only got 3 leaders to begin with. Ah well.

At this point, many concerns seem to whirl around in my mind, vying for my attention. Do this! Do that! Make sure this guy does this! What to do over here! What's for lunch? How am I gonna be able to...

Etc. Try hard to not lose it at this point, cuz if you get caught up thinking about everything, you'll never get finished. Discipline! Handle one thing at a time, get it 80% done, then move on to the next. You may come back to it later, that's OK, but slowly the

whole Defensive Scheme is gonna take shape, and you'll feel good about it. We hope.

OK. The Biggest Issue has already been solved - we know how we're gonna run the defense in general (fall back, etc). The Next Biggest Things in my mind are:

- Where to put the HIP units
- Where to put the 8-1 and 447/MMG
- Where to put the Commissar

Since I like Commissars, it'll make me happy to build part of the defense around the 9-0, so I think about that first. If you're more comfortable tackling the HIPsters, the 8-1/MMG, or some other issue first, by all means do so.

Looking at the board, the area around V10 seems tailor-made for the Commissar. Russian units can hit the Finns as they cross the S7-Y10 road and then rout back to the Commissar in the woods for rallying if need be. Just as important, it doesn't look too difficult to fall back from this area to the next defensive stand around S10 and then L9. So roughly put the 9-0 in V10. Then give him some squads to lead - take four 447's and toss 'em in that area and move on.

Looking at how the Commissar's flank is gonna fall back to the L9 area, I notice that P8 has a heck of a nice field of fire. Maybe a good spot for a HIPster. Hmm, tentatively put a 447 in P8.

Geez, the long glorious Firelanes I could lay if I only didn't have Ammo Shortage. Well, hell, the Lines of Sight are still open along the streets, so I might as well use 'em. R4 would be a great place to have an MMG, but I've got to set up between rows V-AA. Well heck, is there any place that I can set up and have some effectiveness before falling back to the R4 area? V6 would be nice, but U6 is on Fire, so it'd be hard to fall back. I suppose I could cross into the Drifting Smoke in U7 and catch some beneficial Hindrances that way, but geez, that MMG is 5 PP and I'd be crossing a Wall and entering Smoke for 2 more MF's, while giving the Finns a free defensive fire shot at me. Blech. V4 would be OK, I could put a ? counter on them to cut down on the threat from Prep Fire, and then I could retreat back through U4 and T4 toward R4 during my turn 1. Trouble is, I'd be vulnerable to fire in S4 or S5 - look how the Finn could hit me from Z0, DD4L2, or CC5L1.

Blech. This MMG is a P-I-G **PIG**. I don't wanna have to fall back with it. But hey, wait - if I give it to a HIPster, I can set it up in the rear! Oh joy! Good answer! OK, where's good? Somewhere where he'll have a nice chance of taking the Finns by surprise. How about... K4L2. Mmmmm. Looks GOOD. Nice LOS out to R0, and all the Graveyard hexes are only +1 TEM, so I'd have a nice advantage there if it came to a firefight vs Finns advancing through the Graveyard. And hey, I can always retreat back to I5L2 in order to get LOS to the I10 area. OK, do it!

What's left... hmm, got the LMG squads to place. Well, if I'm not gonna put the MMG in V4 and fall back to R4, then how about an LMG. He's gonna need a Leader to get him back to R4 and keep him from Cowering, so can I spare the 7-0? Sure; the 9-0's handling the eastern board edge, so the 7-0 will go nicely in the center where he can go wherever he's needed. So the 7-0, 447/LMG go in V4. Throw a concealment counter on 'em.

OK, we've done a lot of rear area stuff, we better throw some squads out on the front lines just to keep the Finns honest. We're not gonna stand and fight in strength, but we do have to stick a

few guys up there. Throw a 447 somewhere in the big Z2 building and one in the Z6 area. Figure out exactly where to place 'em later, after we've got the overall force distribution close to where we like it.

OK, now what to do about the western board edge. Hmm, W1's got a nice 4-hex shot to AA1, so that covers the board edge nicely. REAL nicely. Give 'em an LMG? Umm, no. I think Commissar Denisova's group will probably need an LMG more. So just stick a 447 in W1. Don't conceal him just yet - he's far enough in the rear and in a stone building, so he may not need the extra protection of a concealment counter.

Boy, I don't like how isolated the little section is that's bounded by the Q1-U3-Y1 road. I doubt anybody in that area's gonna be able to retreat out of there without getting interdicted by the Finns. Well, who knows. I can't just leave that area unguarded. Stick another 447 in W1 and throw a ? counter on 'em to help 'em out. Hmm, another ? counter on top of that will make this stack look suspiciously like a leader with a squad and MG. OK, plop another ? on there and see how it feels.

All right. 3 squads and 5 Concealment counters left, and I still need to decide about that second HIP 447 that I tentatively put in P8. How's that guy lookin' now that I've got most of the defense set up? Hmm, OK I guess, but when Denisova's boys retreat southward, P8 might look like a good place to defend from, and I don't need a HIP unit getting discovered by probing fire. Hrmgm. Q7? S8 Level 2? Nothing's hitting me. I know I want this guy somewhere around the middle of the board, because by around turn 4, the game will have progressed to that area and I want to hit John with a HIP surprise just to throw him off balance. Hmm, leave this guy in P8 for now.

The front-line guys are definitely gonna need concealment to help them survive Finnish Prep Fire, so let's put two ? counters on those guys and see what we've got left. Three squads and three ? counters. That's probably OK. I doubt that John will be fooled much by me making any Dummy stacks - good players tend to aggressively probe Dummies, so it's probably be a waste for me to make any Dummies.

Let's set up Denisova's group and see how that works. You know, AA10's actually kind of a nice hex. It has the +2 Wall TEM from every hex except DD10, so it's semi-protected from Finnish Prep Fire. Guess I could conceal it if I really needed the protection - no, wait, I can't; OB-given Concealment counters can only go in Concealment Terrain [A12.12]. Dang, I always get that one wrong. Well, OK, no big deal. The nice thing about AA10 is that it really seals off the eastern board edge. The Finn could break this guy in Prep Fire, but he'd have to make a few units waste time firing instead of moving. And even if he breaks, he STILL blocks the Finn from a Board Edge Creep just with his broken body. Seems worth it to me - take one of the un-assigned 447's and stick him in AA10.

OK, whoever's left better bulk up the middle cuz it's looking kinda lonely out there. First let's figure out a final placement for those two 447's that we assigned before. Let's think about how we can set up a wall of residual firepower. AA1 is covered by W1, and BB4/BB5 by V4. Let's put the western guy in AA3, just to cover the street. And let's put him at Level 2 to keep those lousy Finnboys from CC'ing him on turn 1 (or at least forcing them to go CX or use a leader to get the extra MF's he'd need to get up there).

Since AA3 will probably get shot up on turn 1, let's give the eastern guy a little more cover. The AA and Z hexrows are too close to the front. Let's be content with putting the next guy in X6; his job is to guard the Z3/Z4/Y5/Y6/Y7 corridor. If he can, he'll fall back on turn 1 by dashing across the W street. Since the guy in X6 is real and we have three ? counters left, we'll put a dummy somewhere else in his vicinity, so how about a ?+1 in Z8 - that's plausible.

OK, only 2 unassigned squads and a ? counter left. Let's put one of the squads up there to help the guy in AA3, but put him somewhere out of Finnish LOS so's he can start the game concealed. Z2 Level 0 is kind of interesting - can't be seen from any Finnish starting point, even CC8L2, and can fire Point Blank at the stairwell in AA2. He even does a nice job of blocking the only attack route through cover in that area - everything else is open ground. Stick him in there, babe. In fact, Z2 does such a nice job that I wonder if AA3L2 isn't necessary. Wellll, let's let him stay there and see how he does.

What's left is a 447 and a ? counter. Might be good to have some kind of Strategic Reserve, hey? So put him in the center of the board where he can respond to situations that develop. Problem is, V4 is the only cover available, and I don't want to stack two squads together if I can help it. But I don't want to just leave him exposed in V2, V3, V5, or V6 - he'll probably be the Front Line guy for my turn 2 defense, so I'm gonna want him to be able to keep concealment. X2 or X3 would be OK, but somehow I'm worried that they won't be able to retreat back across the W street without taking fire or losing concealment. Sigh. Well, hell. Put the 447 in with the other boys in V4 and live with it. If John wants to spend his PFPh shooting up V4 with a 6(+2) shot from a 648/LMG, 648/MMG in CC5, that's his business. The odds of that shot breaking a ML7 unit are only 20%...

No, wait. I'd just hate it if John rolled well on that Prep Fire shot to start the game. I'd rather not stack. So where else can this dingus go. How about V6 - will probably be out of Finnish LOS, so can start the game concealed, and has nice LOS to Z9. Can assault move through the cover of V5 or U7 if need be. OK, good enough.

OK, let's do Denisova's boys on the east side. Denisova has to stay healthy, so we're giving absolutely no prep fire shots to the Finns. The 9-0 goes in V10, along with a 447 on top. The Finn will only be able to see the 447 before the game starts and this stack gains concealment [A2.9], so the Finn won't know that I have a Commissar. Or if he's smart enough to know that I probably have exchanged a leader for a Commissar, he won't know exactly where it is.

The rest of the troopers over there are pretty much free to take whatever potshots they want on turn 1; the Finns shouldn't be able to make it too far south in this area. And even if the Russians reveal themselves and get broken by the Finnish return fire, there's always Denisova to rally them later on. Thus, this group can afford to get a little trigger-happy. One 447 in W10, one in V9, and one in V9L1, with LOS over the wall to cover aggressive Finnish moves around Z8. Give this last guy the LMG since he's potentially got a few different hexes to fire at, and spend the last Concealment counter on him just to protect him from Finnish Prep.

OK Babe, it's starting to look like A Plan. What do we think? Hmmmm. That's kind of an awful lot of 447's showing their faces to the Finns. I'd like to deny them a little more information than

that. Maybe... stick another 447 under the ? counter around Denisova. That ?+3 stack might look like a leader, squad + MG. OK, and how about putting 'em in W10, where they'll have better LOS to the BB8 area, and then sticking that 447 that was at level 0 in W10 in V10. OK, cool. Violating some laws about stacking units, but at least the Finns won't be able to positively identify as many 447's now.

OK, feeling good. Final Check now on the overall force balance - east/center/west, as well as north/south. Looks OK. Not delighted with AA3L2 - that guy is a goner on turn 1 for sure. How about moving him somewhere else in the same building where he'll do some more good. Hmmm, how about Y3 level 0. That way he can cover the Z3/Z4/AA5 area and still have a good chance of skulking during the Russian turn 1. And he's 5 hexes from the CC6 building, so the 648's won't have such a good Prep Fire shot at him (I'm pointedly ignoring CC4). So the 447 in Z2 is just responsible for PBF vs AA2/AA3, and blocking cover through the building with his body. If the Finn wants to spend MF's climbing stairs in AA2, he's entitled. Hmmm, OK. Still not delighted since Y3 is 4 hexes from CC4, but I'm getting tired of futzing with this setup.

Last Guy is HIPster-Boy in P8. How's HE looking? Hmmm... OK. He probably won't have a chance to retreat outta there since the Finns could shoot him up as he Bypassed out of the Rowhouse there, but what the hell. At that stage of the game, I'll have Denisova's boys holed up around O10, and it'll be good to have this guy laying resid in Q8 and Q9. FPF if he has to. Why not.

One last check... and we're done! Johhhnnnn..... I'm readyyyyyyyyy.....

Oh! One more thing!

Post-Setup Anxiety Phase

Wherein we don't beat ourselves up about our setup. One of the biggest mistakes that newbies make is getting on their own case about things that they do wrong. Look, nobody plays this game well without making a ton of mistakes, big and small, in the learning process. Giving yourself stress about it won't help one iota. In fact, you'll be helping your opponent win because you're so busy messing with your own head. RELAX. Cut yourself some slack. Try to enjoy the game.

Go back and re-read my thought processes as I did my setup. Notice how much was geared towards doing what felt good, and how little was geared towards the numbers game. Sure, part of that comes from experience, but part of it is wisdom that's hard-earned: don't waste your time worrying about maximizing this, minimizing that, getting the last Nth percentage out of these guys, etc. You won't enjoy the game any more by niggling over these details, and experience will give you a feel for this stuff anyway.

OK, what Cardinal Rules did I violate in my setup?

- Don't Stack. Got me some nice multi-squad stacks in W1 and W10. On the bright side, they're both concealed and in good building TEM. And the guys in W1 are masquerading as a leader/squad/MG stack.
- Get The Big MG In The Game. That MMG way in the back isn't gonna get any shots off in anger until turn 3 at the earliest. My answer to that? So what. He's got great LOS and he's really gonna affect the middle of the game. If I put him

up front where he'd get shots off right away, I'd have a hell of a time retreating with him because he's so damn heavy.

- Put Somebody On The Goal Line. Conventional Wisdom says that the Russians should have a HIP squad somewhere way in the back so that they can exit him on the last player turn and hopefully win the game. Yeah, well, I'm gonna try to win the game some other way. My way.
- Don't Just Sit There And Get Creamed. Yeah, a couple of my units are poised to take the gaspipe on turn 1. With the setup restrictions, that's just the way it is. Can't just set up on the V hexrow and totally cede the W-BB hexrows to the Finns; SOMEBODY's gotta offer resistance. I did what I could for those guys, giving them concealment and covering fire. And even the ones who are destined to break on turn 1 (Z2 and AA10) are going to accomplish something in the process, blocking Finnish attack paths with their broken bodies.

See what I mean? Every setup is gonna violate SOME Principles of Good Play. Hopefully you'll have good reasons for what you do. The big lesson? Don't Sweat It.

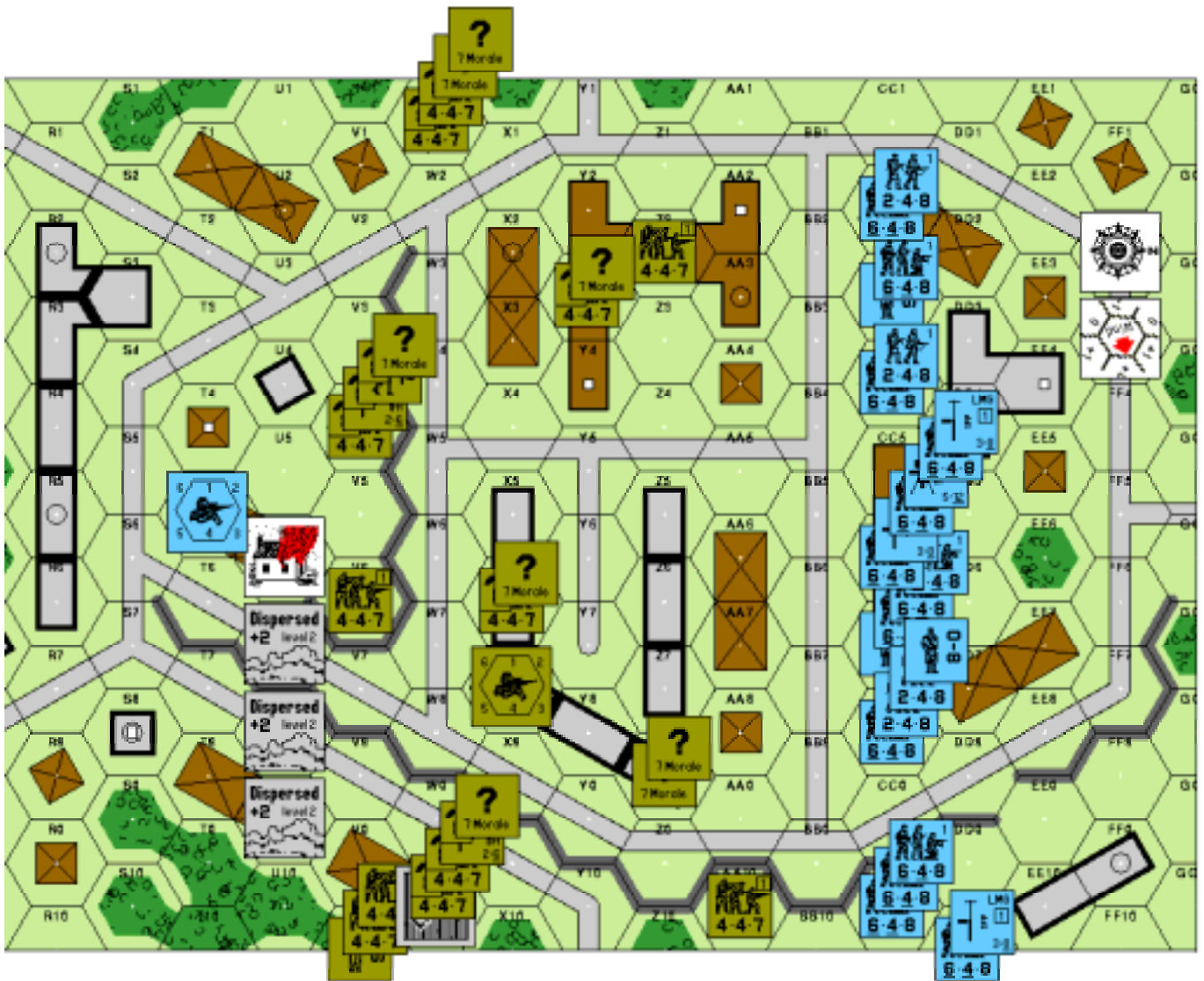
Finnish Setup - John

As the attacker, a good way to begin is to examine your opponent's defense and try to make some intelligent guesses about what is what. There's always some margin or error here and you won't be 100% right, but anything that you can surmise in advance is a good thing. In FW the Russian OB includes 8 concealment counters and 28 total counters. On the board I only count 6 concealments, and 24 total counters. Let's not forget that the Reds can setup two MMCs and and leaders/SW with them HIP. I'm going to guess two squads and one SW are setup HIP. I might be off by a SW or there might be a leader HIP too, but we're just doing a back-of-the-envelope estimate. So three counters HIP means there should be 25 counters on board. Since I only count 24 I'm guessing that an additional counter is HIP or Tom is trying to pull a fast one on me by not placing one of his concealment counters on board. With only 7 concealment counters total, and 6 shown on board, we can conclude that one of the ?(+1) stacks is a dummy, or one of the larger concealed stacks has two concealments on top. Again, we don't know anything for sure, we're just guessing, and we're not going to waste any more effort on this.

I suspect that the MMG is not HIP for the simple reason that it is the most powerful SW in the Russian OB, and as such should be used as much as possible. Not really a good idea in this case to waste HIP on a weapon which you want to fire every turn. Assuming it is non-HIP, there are only four places on board it be: W1, V4, V10, or W10L1. I'm going to guess W1 because of these choices it offers the best defensive TEM (+3 stone) and the best lanes of fire, either down the W-row or X1-Y1-CC1 road. Even though he can't lay a fire lane, this spot will still yield good defensive fire opportunities. Since I can't inspect any enemy stacks before play [A2.9], I'm not sure what's in that unconcealed stack in V10, but I suspect two squads and a leader or a squad and leader holding a SW. In the latter case the leader might choose to transfer the SW to the squad during play. This is an old trick to keep your opponent from seeing where your leaders and SW are - set up with the leader possessing the SW, and the MMC on top of the stack, then during the first turn Rally Phase, transfer the SW from the leader to the MMC.

Finnish Plan

Pregame Setup before placing of concealment counters on out-of-LOS units as per A12.12. Not shown are the Russian HIP units in P8 and K4L2.
All graphics in this document are from VASL 2.5, courtesy of Carl Fung and Rodney Kinney.



Both sides of the board seem to be defended well. I've decided to force the issue down the east side of the board where I can hopefully take advantage of the stone wall, stone row houses, and eventually the smoke from the burning building in U6. I don't expect any HIP guys up front, since the longer you maintain HIP the longer you keep your opponent on edge. There is only one good prep opportunity on board and that is the apparent 0 TEM shot from DD10 to AA10. The LOS is close, but I believe it misses the BB9/BB10 wall. (The BB9/BB10 wall artwork on my board is quite thick.) We'll prep an 8 flat there and then hopefully open up that edge of the board for the three squads in CC10 to move. That Red brokie will still block my movement, and slow my progress, but at least it will hopefully be one defending squad out of commission. I'm actually surprised that Tom put a unit in the seemingly vulnerable position. I can't help but wonder if it is a trap with maybe a hipster in Z10. Since that is the only good fire opportunity, the MMG will be looking to move to a position where it can get good turn 1 defensive and turn 2 prep fire shots.

As I've mentioned, 2 squads are deployed and the resulting 4 HS will be leading the way, trying to draw fire, restrict enemy SFF opportunities, and strip enemy concealment. Provided that the Russian 447 in AA10 breaks or pins almost everyone else will be dashing across the BB road into buildings across the street. The guys in CC2/CC4 will dash into AA2/AA4, with the aggressive HS maybe moving all the way to Z3. One and maybe both HS in CC9 will head for AA8. The remaining guys will dash to AA7/AA8 and then advance into the Z row. I think that the concealed Russian in Y3 can see BB6, but because of range and dashing no residual will be left in the hex [Initial shot halved twice, once for range, once for dashing for a 1(-2) and no residual.]

In a nutshell that's the plan. Let's get it on!

ASL 1 Fighting Withdrawal

Russian Setup HIP units are listed (in parentheses)

X7	Sniper (placed after Finnish setup)
K4L2	(8-1, 447/MMG)
P8	(447)
V4	?, 7-0, 447/LMG
V6	447
V10	447, 447, 9-0
W1	?, ?, 447, 447
W10L1	?, 447, 447/LMG
X6	?, 447
Y3	?, 447
Z2	447
Z8	?, ?
AA10	447

Finnish Setup

T5	Sniper
CC2	248, 648
CC3	648, 9-0
CC4	248, 648
CC6	648/LMG, 648/MMG, 648/LMG
CC7	8-0, 648, 648, 648
CC8	8-0, 648, 248, 248
CC10	648, 648, 648
DD10	648/LMG

Note that two Finnish squads have been deployed as per A2.9.

Note the convention of possessing a SW with a slash (/) - so a 648/LMG is a 648 possessing an LMG.

Pregame Comment From Tom - Just a note here - John and I won't be discussing the scenario during play; we'll make our comments but keep them to ourselves until it's over.

Looking at John's setup, I think John should have put an LMG/MMG combination at level 2 in CC8; they can do a lot to interdict the Russian fallback defense and won't lag too far behind the attack if you put a leader with 'em. Maybe he just didn't notice what the stairwell in the single-hex building meant; I know I've often been shocked and surprised to see those stupid single-hex 2-level buildings [B23.23].

Before every Finnish player turn, I'll lay out the defensive scheme - who's covering what hexes. In some scenarios, it's not vital that every single hex of the front be covered, and often it's necessary for several different units to share responsibility for covering certain key hexes, but I've found that in all scenarios, it really helps if your defenders know what their defensive assignments are. For Finnish turn 1, we've got:

- W1 covers Y1, Z0, Z1, and AA1
- Z2 covers AA1, Z1, and Z3
- Y3 covers Z3 and Z4
- V4 covers Z4 and Y5
- X6 covers Y5, Y6, and Y7, including Rowhouse Bypass movement in Z7 and Y8
- V6 covers X8 and Y9
- W10L1 covers bypass movement around Y8, Z8, and AA8, as well as AA9 and Y10
- AA10 covers bypass movement around Z8 as well as AA9

Pre-Game

1. Russian places Sniper in X7
2. Both sides conceal units which set up out of enemy LOS [A12.12]. Russian conceals V6, V10, and Z2. Finn conceals CC2, CC3, and CC4.

Finn Turn 1

Rally Phase (RPh)

1. Wind Change DR = 5,2

Prep Fire (PFPh)

1. DD10 at AA10
8(+0) DR = 2,2 2MC
2MC vs 447 DR = 1,4 Pin

Tom: Not too bad for this guy - he's Pinned, but he can still claim Wall Advantage [B9.32] over the wall hexsides in his hex, so the Finns in CC10 won't be receiving the Wall TEM vs this guy. Even Finns break 50% of the time when they eat a 4-down-2 shot (Point Blank + Pinned).

John: According to the basic laws of probability this guy should have broken, especially after I generated a 2MC. But we suck it up, accept the weirdnesses of fate and try to continue with the pregame plan as much as possible.

Movement Phase (MPH)

1. 248 in CC8 Dashes

- a. BB7 - 1 (total number of MF's expended so far is given after the dash)
- b. AA8 - 3

2. 248 in CC8 Dashes

- a. BB7 - 1
- b. AA8 - 3

3. 248 in CC4 moves

- a. BB3 - 1
- b. AA4 - 3
- c. Z3 - 4

447 in Z2 first fires

8(-2) DR = 5,1 2MC, 4 RFP
2MC vs 248 DR = 1,2 OK

Tom: Aargh! I know the Finns are ubermenschen, but this is ridiculous! Like I said before, Z2's job is to block the building with his body and cover Z1 and Z3. Y3 isn't happy with the threat of being CC'd by a piddling halfsquad - not from the danger of a 1:2 CC attack, but from the danger of not scoring on his own 2:1 attack and being broken by the Finns firing into the ensuing Melee. Still, he'll hold his fire, trying to keep the Finns guessing and banking that he could score on that 2:1 CC attack if need be - all he'd need is a 7 or less.

John: The Finns get their first big break. In order to see the improbable (and tell your friends about it later) you sometimes have to do some gutsy things. This guy sucks up an 8(-2) and doesn't even pin. This is not a standard technique, but as I mentioned above, in this scenario it's necessary for the Finns to take some chances and hope their high morale pulls them through.

4. 648 in CC4 dashes

- a. BB3 - 1
- b. AA4 - 3

5. 248 in CC2 dashes

- a. BB2 - 1
- b. AA2 - 3

6. 648 in CC2 dashes

- a. BB2 - 1
- b. AA3 - 3

7. 648 in CC7 dashes

- a. BB7 - 1
- b. AA8 - 3

8. 648 in CC7 dashes

- a. BB7 - 1
- b. AA8 - 3

9. 8-0, 648 move from CC7

- a. BB7 - 1

b. AA10 fires

2(-2) DR = 6,2 PTC, 1 RFP
PTC vs 8-0 DR = 1,3 OK

PTC vs 648 DR = 1,1 OK (HoB doesn't apply to Pin Task Checks)

c. AA7, bypass AA7/AA8 - 2

d. Z7 - 4

e. Y8 - 6

John: THAT should get some attention....

Tom: No, but I wish. X6 could get off a Snap Shot at 2-flat, but it's looking like he's gonna want to retain his concealment next turn. 2-flat isn't a great shot, either, and X6 isn't in imminent danger of being CC'd. W10L1 could get off an 8-up-2 shot, but their's not great odds either, and they'd like to retain their concealment as well, saving their shots for FFMO opportunities. Given how slowly the rest of the Finns are moving, it'd probably be OK for W10L1 to take a shot here, but I decided to pass.

10. 648/LMG in CC6 dashes

- a. BB6 - 1
- b. AA7 - 3

11. 10. 648/MMG in CC6 dashes

- a. BB6 - 1
- b. AA7 - 3

12. 648/LMG in CC6 dashes

- a. BB6 - 1
- b. AA7 - 3

13. 648 in CC10 assault moves

- a. BB9 - 2

b. AA10 Subsequent First Fires

2(-1) DR = 5,1 NMC, 1 RFP
NMC vs 648 DR = 2,3 OK

14. 648 in CC10 assault moves

- a. BB9 - 2
- b. 1 RFP hits 1(-1) DR = 3,3 PTC (RFP doesn't cower, A8.224)
PTC vs 648 DR = 2,5 OK, Russian SAN
Sniper activation dr = 6, no

15. 648 in CC10 assault moves

- a. BB10 - 1
- b. AA10 Final Protective Fires
2(-1) DR = 6,2 miss, breaks AA10, 1 RFP

Tom: Hadda try it; AA10 was a goner anyway, so any opportunity to break a Finnish unit was worth it for this guy. He definitely did his job, causing one 648 to Prep Fire (and thus not move) and three 648's to assault move only one hex. We shall honor his memory (sniff).

16. 648 in CC8 moves

- a. BB7 - 1 RFP hits at 1(-2) DR = 3,5 no
- b. BB6 - 2
- c. AA6 - 4

17. 8-0 in CC8 moves

- a. CC7 - 2
- b. BB6 - 3
- c. AA6 - 5

18. 648 in CC3 moves

- a. BB3 - 1
- b. AA4 - 3 (losing concealment)
- c. AA5 - 4

d. 447 in Y3 drops concealment and fires
4(-2) DR = 1,6 IMC, 2 RFP
1MC vs 648 DR = 4,4 breaks, DM

19. 9-0 in CC3 moves

- a. BB2 - 1
- b. AA3 - 3, losing concealment

Defensive Fire Phase (DFPh)

1. 447 in Y3 final fires at Z3
4(+0) DR = 2,1 2MC
2MC vs 248 DR = 5,5 breaks, DM

2. 447 in Z2 final fires at AA3
4(+2) DR = 3,5 miss

Advancing Fire Phase (AFPh)

1. AA2, AA3, AA4 at Z2 (assault fire is assumed)
12(+2) DR = 6,6 big miss

2. BB9 and BB10 at AA10
20(+0) DR = 5,3 2MC
2MC vs dm447 DR = 3,5 casualty reduces to a HS

3. AA6 at Y3 4(+2) DR = 5,6 miss

4. Y8 at W10L1 2(+2) DR = 6,6

5. AA7 and AA8 at Z8
20(+3) DR = 3,3 IMC (Finns don't cower)
1MC reveals Dummy in Z8, it is removed

6. Spreading Fire: Each Burnable Terrain Location is subject to only one Spreading Fire DR (the one with the greatest chance of causing a Flame to appear) [B25.6]

T5L0 from U6L0: DR = 3,5 (+1 Dry EC) = 9 Flame appears
T5L1 from U6L1: DR = 5,2 (+1 Dry EC) = 8 Flame appears
G3 from G2L0: DR = 4,4 (+1 Dry EC +2 Wind DRM -2 not directly attached) = 9 Flame appears
F2L0 from G2L0: DR = 2,2 (+1 Dry EC +1 Wind DRM) = 6, no Flame
F2L1 from G2L1: DR = 3,1 (+1 Dry EC +1 Wind DRM) = 6, no Flame

7. All the Flames onboard were just created this turn, so we don't need to do any Flame to Blaze spread [B25.151].

Rout Phase (RtPh)

Finn Routs:

- 1. AA5 to AA6
- 2. Z3 to AA4

Russian Routs:

- 1. AA10 to Z10

Tom: Thought heavily about self-breaking Z2 and going to Y3, X3 and blocking the approach path through the bldg with his body, but decided not to.

Advance Phase (APh)

- 1. AA2 to Z2
- 2. 9-0 in AA3 to AA4
- 3. 648 in AA3 to Z2
- 4. 648 in AA4 to Z3
- 5. 648 in AA6 to Z5

- 6. 8-0 in AA6 to Z6
- 7. 648/LMG, 648/MMG in AA7 to Z6
- 8. 648/LMG in AA7 to Z7
- 9. everybody in AA8 to Z8
- 10. 648 in BB9 to AA9
- 11. 648 in BB9 to AA10
- 12. 648 in BB10 to AA10
- 13. DD10 to CC10
- 14. 648 in Y8 to Y9

Close Combat Phase (CCPh)

1. Ambush in Z2

Finns: dr = 4 (-1 stealth) = 3 Russians: dr = 5 no Ambush

Both Finns will combine and go 2:1 vs the 447
The 447 will go 2:1 vs the Finnish 248

Finnish DR = 2,3 447 KIA'd
Russian DR = 1,1 (!)

By A18.12, we do a dr for possible Field Promotion dr = 6 (+1 Russian) = 7, no Leader (dang!)

If a leader had been generated, we'd have to recalculate the CC odds to see if the results of the CC DR's have changed. In this case, a leader defending with the 447 would add 1 FP to the Russian side, so the Finnish attack would go off at 8:5 (= 3:2) instead of 2:1. The Finnish DR of 5 would still have eliminated the entire Russian side, but a Finnish DR of 6 would only CR one of the two Russian defending units, as chosen by Random Selection [A11.11].

Since the 447 has already been eliminated, it cannot use Infiltration [A11.22] to withdraw from the CC. So its 2:1 attack goes through as planned, and the DR of 2 eliminates the Finnish HS.

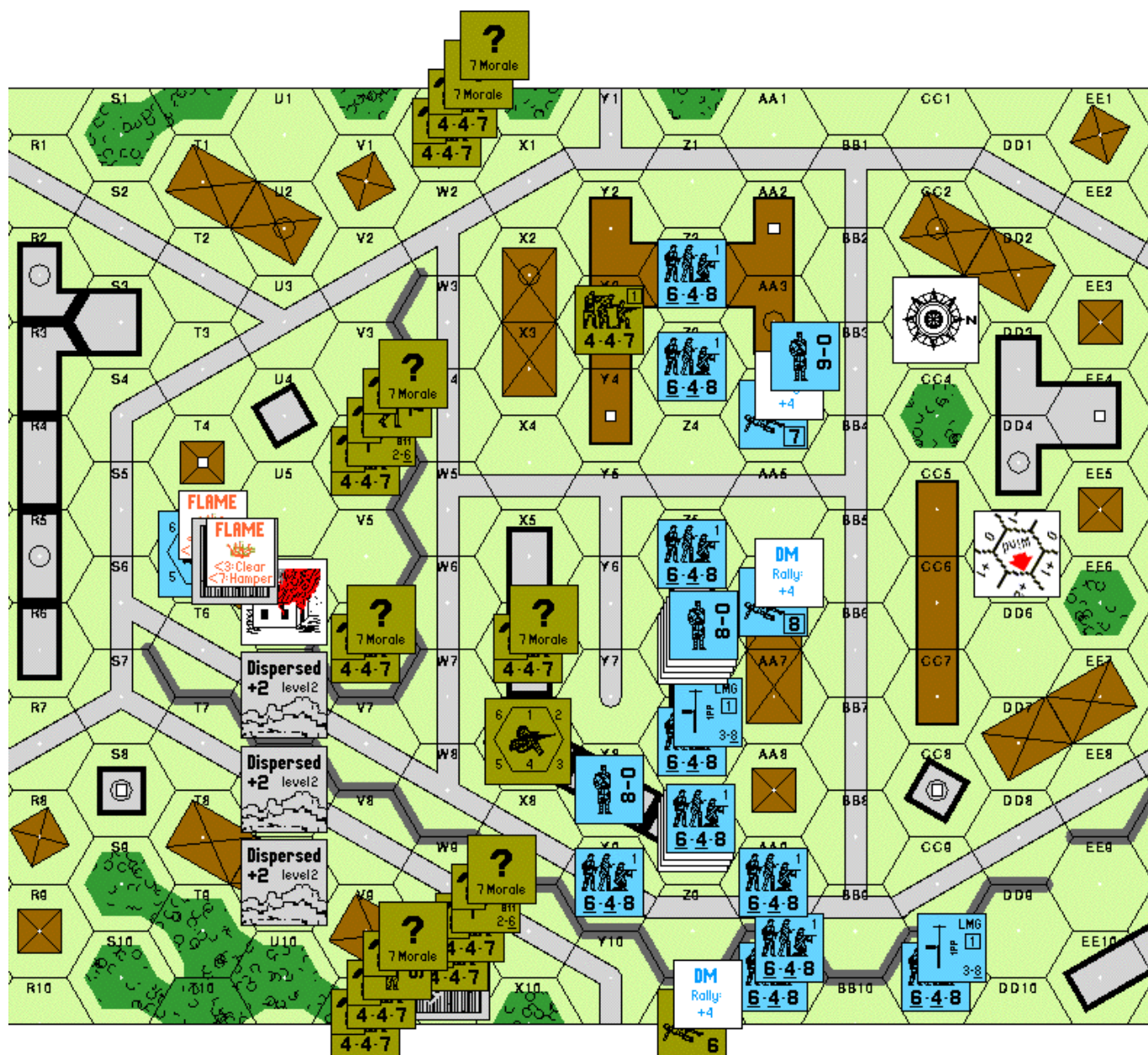
Finnish Post-Turn Comments

All in all not a bad start. My Prep Fire only pins the AA10 unit, but that does eliminate residual potential from this guy if he fires at my guys dashing across the row BB street. I try to give Tom some tough decisions by moving my guys along the east edge last, trying to draw fire with my dashing units. I think that the squad placement in AA10 was doomed to result in a captured Russian squad. In situations like this it's necessary to balance force conservation with good defensive play. This AA10 position is a good one for sucking up some fire and slowing the Finn advance, either with broken bodies or defensive fire. But IMO the inevitable loss of a full squad is too much. A half-squad in this position would achieve a better balance. Unfortunately the Russian OB has no HS, and since they can't deploy, I would have not put anyone in this position.

Two Finns end up broken but no casualties. I meant to enter a HS into the concealed Z8 location, but forgot. Turned out to be dummies but luckily I didn't draw any sniper shots with my advancing fire. Advancing fire reduced the broken Russian in AA10 and with my advances he'll be forced to surrender next turn, unless he self rallies, since he can't rout into Y10 (getting closer to Finn in Y9.) The 648 in Y9 insures at least one shot at the W10L1 stack, even if he decides to Assault Move downstairs. If he chooses to stay there or move into V9L1 I'll be able to hit him with my units in Y9, Z8, and AA9. I win the CC in Z2, losing a HS, and I'm now in position to make a reasonable push along the east edge, using the wall for cover, while a respectable

Board status at end of Finnish turn 1.

Z8 contains a 648, 648, 248, 248. Z6 contains an 8-0, 648/MMG, 648/LMG.



force in the west keeps him busy on that side. Probably won't get too many DF shots in the Russian half of the turn, as I expect a lot of skulking from Tom.

Russian Post-Turn Comments

Can't complain. Finnish movement featured a lot of Dashing and assault moving, which is not the way to progress down the board rapidly. More importantly, John seems to be eschewing the kind of attack that I really fear - a hyper-aggressive probe by hordes of Finnish halvesquads. That move of his into Y8 (and the accompanying advance of the squad into Y9) is the kind of aggressiveness that I think the Finns need to show. Advancing into open ground isn't Standard Good Practice, but it's good for the Finns in this scenario. What am I gonna do - Prep Fire at that guy? No way - I'd get mauled in the DFPh.

Standing in for CC in Z2 probably wasn't smart - John and I had just finished a parallel game of Schwerkpunkt's Men From Mars (which I had won) [John: It's a dog! :)] and I was feeling perhaps a bit more lucky than I should have. Even if I had avoided getting whacked by the 2:1 attack and had managed to make this a Melee, the Finns could easily have fired into the Melee in the DFPh of Russian turn 1. With my morale of 7 and his morale of 8, he'd stand a better chance of surviving the attack. And even if both of us had broken, the Finnish unit would have rallied to return to the fight, while the Russian unit would surely have been captured and killed during the Finnish turn 2.

For the upcoming turn, I'm in a bit of a dilemma because John's attack is moving at a pace that I don't know what to do with. If he had been more aggressive, I'd know to fall back south of the W hexrow. If he'd been less aggressive, I'd be tempted to stand for one more turn in the X row rowhouses. This middle-speed puts me in a position where I could screw things up by trying a half-and-half approach. Another lesson for good ASL play: the more decisions you force on your opponent, the more chances he has to get something wrong.

Sigh. Think I'll err on the side of caution and fall back south of the W hexrow.

Now we see how putting those guys together up in W10L1 wasn't such a great idea. They won't be able to avoid Finnish dfire in the upcoming player turn; anywhere they move to will be within Finnish LOS. The best move is to assault move downstairs so as to retain their concealment while getting out of LOS of the Finns in Z8 and AA9, but even then they'll be vulnerable to a 6(+2) shot from AA10, which stands a good chance of stripping their concealment for follow-on shots. Sigh.

OK. The Plan next turn:

- V6, Y3, and X6 fall back to defend the W hexrow wall
- V4 falls back to S4 to fire down the street to Y1
- One squad in W1 holds the far west flank while another falls back
- W10L1 repositions to defend the V8/W9/W10 approach
- V10 repositions to have the Commissar accept broken units during the R1 RtPh

Russian Turn 1

Rally Phase (RPh)

1. Wind Change DR = 1,2 no change
2. MMC self-rally attempt in Z10

DR = 4,1 (+4 DM +1 self-rally -1 in woods) = 9, no. Stays DM because of the adjacent enemy units.

3. Finn 9-0 rallies the DM248 in AA4: DR = 1,1 rallies, Heat of Battle [A15.1]

HoB DR = 5,1 (-1 Finn +1 broken) = 6.

Since the 248 is already Elite, he Battle Hardens to Fanatic. And a 149 Hero is generated.

4. Finn dm648 self-rallies in AA6

DR = 5,1 no, remove DM

Prep Fire (PFPh) - none

Movement Phase (MPh)

1. Y3 assault moves X2 - 2

2. W1 assault moves V1 - 2

3. X6 assault moves W6 - 1

4. V4 moves

a. U4 - 2

b. T4 - 4

5. V6 assault moves V5 - 1

6. W10L1 assault moves W10L0

7. V10 moves

a. U10, bypass U10/V9, U10/U9 - 1

b. T9, bypass T9/U9, T9/T8 - 2

c. S9 - 4

Tom: That last move depends on the U10/U9 hexside being bypassable by infantry, which means the woods in U10 can't touch the hexside. On my board, it's close but good.

Defensive Fire Phase (DFPh)

1. Y9 at W10

2(+2) DR = 1,1 1MC (Finns don't cower)

1MC vs 447/LMG DR = 2,1 OK

1MC vs 447 DR = 3,2 OK

Tom: Geez. Nothing like passing morale checks like that.

Wonder why John didn't dfire from the two squads in AA10 to W10? Especially after this first shot stripped the Russian concealment - he had a 12+2 shot. I catch a lucky break.

Advancing Fire Phase (AFPh)

1. W10 at Y9

4(+2) DR = 6,5 no

2. Spreading Fire [B25.6]. Note that multiple Flames can occur in the same Location until the Location becomes ablaze.

T5L0 from U6L0: DR = 1,2 (+1 Dry EC) = 4 no new flame T5L1

from U6L1: DR = 5,1 (+1 Dry EC) = 7 no new Flame

G3 from G2L0: DR = 1,2 (+1 Dry EC +2 Wind DRM -2 not directly attached) = 4 no new Flame

F2L0 from G2L0: DR = 1,3 (+1 Dry EC +1 Wind DRM) = 6, no Flame

F2L1 from G2L1: DR = 6,4 (+1 Dry EC +1 Wind DRM) = 12, Flame appears

3. Flame to Blaze spread [B25.151]. Note that the EC DRM won't apply since all of these Flames are in buildings.

T5L0: DR = 4,4 Blazes
T5L1: DR = 5,2 No Blaze
G3: DR = 2,2 No Blaze

Rout Phase (RtPh)

Z10 has no legal rout path, so he will either Surrender [A20.21] or be eliminated for Failure to Rout [A10.5]. Finnish player decides to accept the surrender; the squad in AA10 will become the Guarding unit. By A20.5, it can Deploy at any time, and it does so immediately.

Tom: Good players take Prisoners. I know it can be a pain to learn the Prisoner rules, but they're just not that hard, and it sure does help when the enemy Surrenders instead of Low Crawling away, possibly to live and fight another day.

Advance Phase (APh)

1. 447/LMG in W10 to V9
2. ?,9-0,447 in S9 to T9
3. ?, 447 in S9 to S8
4. W6 to V6
5. V5 to V4
6. T4 to S4
7. ?,447 in V1 to U2

Close Combat Phase (CCPh)

1. Conceal X2

Finnish Post-Turn Comments

Things start off nicely as the leader-assisted rally yields a hero and fanaticism. This fanatic guy with his morale of 9 is now my new point man. Tom does the expected and moves his units out of my LOS except for the W10 stack which assault moves downstairs. A lucky 2(+2) from my Y9 unit reveals it to be two squads and an LMG. I also missed a wonderful followup 12(+2) attack. I knew that attack was there, but just forgot to execute it. In FTF play these things happen. In PBeM where the pace is a lot slower mistakes like this are unforgiveable. With his advances he's in position to hammer me again as I move next turn. Tom's moves have also lead me to believe that his MMG is HIP, and not along the west edge of the board as I previously guessed. Based on the height of his stacks, if one of those units advanced with the MMG it would have had to go CX, and wouldn't have been able to AM into the building since that would use all of its available movement factors. The MMG placement for the Russians in this one is really a tough call. Put it up front and you risk losing it if its owner breaks, since you can't rout with a 5 PP weapon. Put it HIP in the backfield somewhere and you don't get to use it as often as you'd like. Personally, since the ammo shortage is likely to render this weapon broken anyway, I'd put it near the front, since I want to get as many shots as possible before it breaks.

Russian Post-Turn Comments

Not a good turn. For some reason I brain-farted and didn't stick with The Plan. Not enough falling back - assault moving isn't gonna fall back far enough, fast enough. What was I THINKING?

On the west side, the guy in X2 should have crossed the street and wound up around W1 where he'd have a nice LOS down the W street and be able to cover Y1 as well. Then the ?+3 in W1 could have repositioned to the rowhouses in the middle of the map where they'd be able to respond wherever needed next turn

without being seen by the Finns- by moving back behind the rowhouses.

Only two squads positioned really wrong, but that can be enough against an aggressive Finn. If John plays it right, he'll be able to keep my guys on the western board edge from ever reinforcing the middle, thus denying me two important squads. Ergh!

The east side isn't too awful, but only because I got ridiculously lucky passing those MC's in W10. And that John failed to see the LOS from AA10 for a follow-on 12+2 shot. Phew.

OK. Defensive assignments for this turn:

- LMG boys in S4 cover the street out toward Y1
- V1 guy protects the area in front of him
- X2 guy protects Y1, X1, W3, and W4
- V4 protects W5 and X4
- V6 covers W7 and V7
- V9 covers V8
- W10 covers W9 and X9

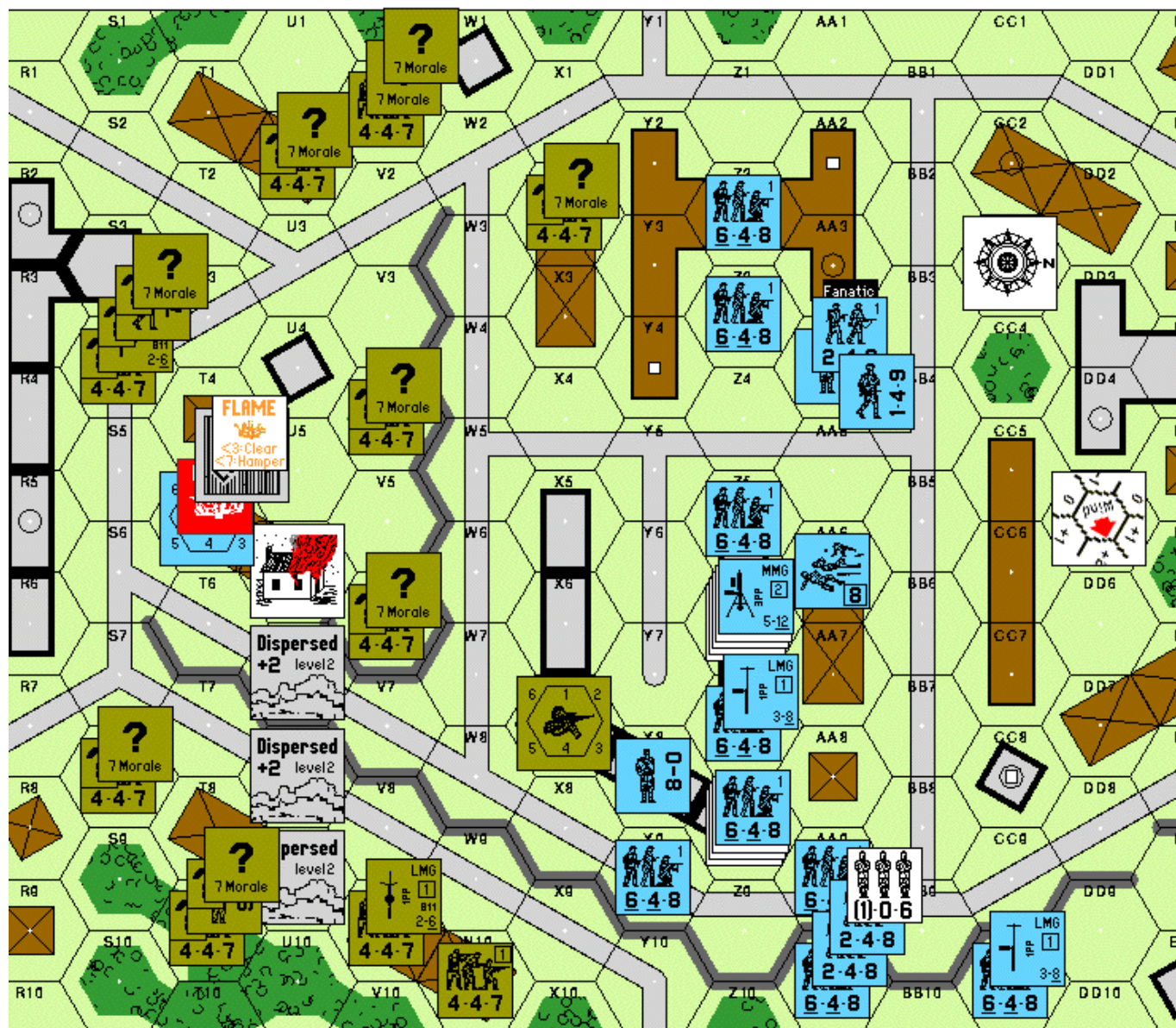
Big Priority for this turn is making sure the Finns don't penetrate along the V7/V8 corridor. If they do, I'll have a hard time falling back from V9/W10 and rallying with the commissar. And the guys in the middle will be in danger of being cut off. (V6 is sacrificial this turn; he'll go down in advancing fire or next turn's first fire since he has nowhere to skulk to).

The Big Hole this turn is in W6; V6 has other priorities and nobody else can get off a good shot. I expect John to find the hole and exploit it. Dangit. Why, oh why didn't I put the guy in V1 back to W1? At least he'd have a 2(-2) shot at W6.

ONE of the W10 and adjacent guys can break in prep fire, as long as SOMEBODY's left alive to cover V8. Doesn't matter if they both break by the AFPh; they'll rout back to the commissar and hopefully rally by my next turn, to reposition the defense back around the R-S rows.

19 May 2000

Z8 contains a 648, 648, 248, 248. Z6 contains an 8-0, 648/MMG, 648/LMG.



Finn Turn 2

Rally Phase (RPh)

1. Wind Change DR = 2,1 NE
2. Self Rally in AA6 DR = 6,1 rallies

Prep Fire (PFPh)

1. Y9 fires at V9
6(+2) DR = 6,1 NE, Russian SAN
Sniper activation dr = 1, hot
Scatter direction = 4, distance = 4 Moves Russian sniper from X7 to X11.
Finnish units in Y9 and AA10 are the same distance away from X11 and have the same TEM, so the Russian player chooses which hex to hit. He chooses AA10 (and the Sniper counter is moved to AA10).
Random Selection for Finnish units in AA10: 648 dr = 2 248 dr = 6 248/prisoners dr = 2

So break the 248 HS that is not guarding prisoners.

Movement Phase (MPH)

1. 248 moves from Z8
 - a. Y8, bypass Y9/Y9 and Y8/X8 - 1
 - b. X7, bypass X7/X8 and X7/W8 - 2
 - c. W7 - 3
 - d. Russian 447 in V6 temporarily drops concealment and claims Wall Advantage [B9.32] over all wall hexsides of V6. No shot.

2. fanatic 248 in AA4 moves

- a. Z4 - 1
- b. Y5 - 2
- c. X5, bypass X5/X4 and X5/W5 - 3
- d. W6 - 4

Tom: Discipline, discipline! John's not gonna get me to waste my fire on these piddly halvesquads. The 447 in V6 is a throwaway unit this turn; I don't care what John moves into W6 and W7 in order to CC this guy. His job is to guard W8 and V7. Sure would be nice to have somebody in W1, though, to at least lay a little resid in W6. Sigh.

3. 648 in Z3 moves

- a. Y4 - 2
- b. X4 - 3
- c. W5 - 4
- 447 in V4 drops concealment and fires
8(-2) DR = 1,2 XKIA, 4 RFP

4. 248 in Z8 moves

- a. Y9 - 1
- b. X8 - 2
- c. W8 - 3
- d. 447 in V6 drops concealment and fires
4(-2) DR = 3,5 NMC, 2 RFP
NMC vs 248 DR = 5,1 OK
- e. V7 - 4
V6 SFF's 4(-2) DR = 3,3 cowers to 2 column, 1MC, 1 RFP
1MC vs 248 DR = 1,2 OK

Tom: Geez. You can cover all the hexes you want, but if the other guy refuses to fail morale checks, whaddaya gonna do. Odds of the 248 passing the NMC and the 1MC unpinned were 24%; not ridiculously low but not that great either. Sigh. At least we've got some good resid going, so even though V6 is Final

Fired, his resid will still generate some attacks if the Finns want to push through that corridor. And since V6 doesn't plan on living past this player turn anyway, he'll Final Protective Fire on units moving through adjacent hexes at 4-down-2, so things aren't in terrible shape. At least this last 248 didn't CX and penetrate into the Drifting Smoke in U7.

5. 648 in AA9 moves

- a. Z8, bypass Z8/Z9, Z8/Y9 - 1
- b. Y8, bypass Y8/Y9, Y8/X8 - 2
- c. X7, bypass X7/X8, X7/W8 - 3
- d. W7 - 4
- e. V6 will Final Protective Fire
4(-2) DR = 3,3 cowers to 2 column, 1MC, 1 RFP
1MC vs 648 DR = 6,1 Pin, Russian SAN
Sniper activation dr = 6, no

6. 648 in Z8 moves

- a. Y8, bypass - 1
- b. X8, bypass - 2
- c. W8, bypass - 3
- d. W7 - 4
- 1 RFP hits at 1(-2) DR = 3,4 PTC
PTC vs 648 DR = 5,4 Pins

7. 648 in Z8 moves

- a. Y9 - 1
- b. X8 - 2
- c. W8 - 3
- 2 RFP hits at 2(-2) DR = 6,4 NE

- d. V7 - 4

- 1 RFP hits at 1(-2) DR = 6,4 NE

- e. V6 will Final Protective Fire

- 4(-2) DR = 3,3 cowers to 2 column, 1MC
1MC vs 648 DR = 4,5 breaks, DM

8. 648 in AA10 moves

- a. Z9 - 2
- b. Y9 - 3
- c. X8 - 4
- d. 447 in W10 fires
4(+1) DR = 3,4 NE

Tom: I took this relatively low-odds shot because it looks like W10 and V9 aren't going to get any PBF shots at Finns charging into the street right in front of them - John's gonna keep the Finns behind the wall running from W8 to Z9. W10 and V9 were thinking of firegrouping for a Final Fire shot at V7, but V9 can get to the 6 column of the IFT all by himself, so W10 is relatively free to engage in this kind of shot.

9. 648 in Z7 moves

- a. Y8 - 2
- b. Y9 - 3
- c. W10 will Subsequent First Fire
2(+1) DR = 2,3 PTC
PTC vs 648 DR = 4,3 OK, Russian SAN
Sniper activation dr = 6, no

Tom: A 2(+1) shot isn't all that good, but I took it hoping for exactly what happened - a low enough roll that would at least force some kind of MC/TC result that might possibly activate my Sniper. With a SAN of 7, it pays to make the other guy roll as many MC's/TC's as possible, just to get your Sniper in the game.

With an enemy SAN of 2, it's unlikely that this low-odds shot (a "Sniper bait" shot) would wake up the enemy Sniper, so I'm pretty free to take potshots like this.

10. 648 in Z2 moves
 - a. Y3 - 2
 - b. X3 - 4, done moving
 - c. 447 in X2 drops concealment and fires
8(+1) DR = 6,4 miss, 4 RFP

same unit Subsequent First Fires at the second MF expended in the hex 4(+1) DR = 4,5 miss

Tom: X2 waited until the moving unit declared that it was done moving before it announced its shot. I was holding my fire and waiting to see if the 648 would declare a late CX [A4.5] for one more MF to enter the W street, in which case X2 would have fired with the FFNAM/FFMO modifiers. Since the moving unit declared it was done moving, I was free to First Fire knowing that the W hexrow was safe. Gotta be careful of those late CX's - that one extra MF can sometimes burn you. (As per Q&A from '89 and '96 Annuals, the defender can wait until the attacker has declared that a unit is done moving before he First Fires at it.)

11. 648 in Z5 moves
 - a. Z4 - 1
 - b. Z3 - 2
 - c. Y3 - 4
 - d. 447 in X2 Final Protective Fires
4(+1) DR = 6,3 miss, 2 RFP, breaks 447

Tom: Well, sometimes FPF will bite you in the ass. I suppose I was due for it after V6 survived two FPF's. Figured I might as well try to break this guy rather than have two 648's kick my butt at 3:1 in CC.

12. 648 in AA6 moves
 - a. Z5, bypass Z4 - 1
 - b. Y5 - 2
 - c. X5 - 4

13. 149 in AA4 moves
 - a. Z4 - 1
 - b. Y5 - 2
 - c. X5 - 4

14. 648/MMG in Z6 moves
 - a. Y7 - 1
 - b. X7 - 3

15. 648/LMG in Z6 moves
 - a. Y7 - 1
 - b. X6 - 3

16. 8-0 in Z6 moves
 - a. Y7 - 1
 - b. Y8 - 3

17. 9-0 in AA4 moves
 - a. Z3 - 1
 - b. Z2 - 3
 - c. Y2 - 5

18. 648/LMG in CC10 moves
 - a. BB9 - 2
 - b. AA9 - 3

c. Z9 - 4

Defensive Fire Phase (DFPh)

1. V9 at V7
6(+2) DR = 2,5 NE

Advancing Fire Phase (AFPh)

1. Place Drifting Smoke from the new Blaze in T5L0 in T6, T7, T8

2. X3 fires at V4 4(+2) DR = 4,2 NE

3. V7, W7, X7 firegroup at V6
16(+2) DR = 6,4 NE

4. W6, X5, X6 firegroup at V4 (without the LMG)
8(+1) DR = 3,2 1MC
1MC vs 447 DR = 4,5 breaks, DM

5. X8, Y9 (no LMG) firegroup at V9
(+2) DR = 1,4 1MC
1MC vs 447/LMG DR = 4,5 breaks, DM

6. Z9 and LMG in Y9 firegroup at W10
6(+2) DR = 3,2 NMC
NMC vs 447 DR = 2,3 OK

7. Spreading Fire DR's:
T4L0 from T5L0 DR = 5,6 flames
T5L1 from T5L0 DR = 4,5 flames
F2L0 from G2L0 DR = 6,2 flames
G3 from G2L0 DR = 5,2 no

8. Flame to Blaze spread:
G3 DR = 3,1 no
F2L1 DR = 6,6 Blazes
T5L1 (from flame that had been there before this player turn)
DR = 2,2 no

Rout Phase (RtPh)

Finnish Routs:

1. AA10 ignores Z10 and Z8 as being closer to W10 than he already is, so he has to choose AA8 via AA9
2. dm648 in V7 must go to T8 via U8. He can't enter U7 or W7 as his first rout hex because that would be moving adjacent to V6. He also can't enter W8 or V8 because that would be moving closer to the known enemy units in V9 and W10. Since the enemy unit in S8 is not Known, he cannot avoid moving closer to it.

Once he reaches T8, the broken unit has expended 6 MF and has no more MF left to rout with. At this point, the 447 in T9 voluntarily drops concealment and captures T8, as per A20.21 and supported by Q&A from the 1993a Annual. If the broken had any MF remaining to rout with, it could conceivably attempt to rout away from the now-Known ADJACENT enemy unit, but since it has no MF remaining, it is Captured.

Note that if T9 had waited until the Russian part of the Rout Phase (or later) to reveal T9, the broken unit would *not* be captured because *its* RtPh has already been successfully completed. It would not be forced to Surrender since Surrender only occurs during the broken unit's RtPh, nor would it be eliminated for Failure to Rout since it did end its RtPh without being ADJACENT to a Known Enemy Unit.

Russian Routs:

1. X2L0 to X2L1
2. V9 routs to U10, T9
3. W10 self-breaks and routs back to V10, U10, T9
4. V4 to U4, T4

Advance Phase (APh)

1. X3 to W3
2. Y2 and Y3 to X2L0
3. V7 to U7
4. W6 to V5
5. X5 to W5
6. X6 to W6
7. X7 to W8
8. X8 to W9
9. Y9 to X8
10. Y8 to X8
11. Z9 to Y10
12. AA10 to Z9

Close Combat Phase (CCPh)

1. Y10 rolls for concealment $dr = 2 (+3 \text{ squad} -1 \text{ stealthy}) = 4$, yes.

Finnish Post-Turn Comments

Well, I felt the need to push this turn and ended up paying the price. No smoke really hurts and I have to take some real chances by exposing my guys to (-2) shots (FFNAM and FFMO). Not a lot of tact here, just run run run. I suppose a KIA was inevitable with so many shots like this, but I wish it was a HS and not a full squad. That Russian in V6 really earned his pay this turn. Casualties really hurt losing the KIA squad and another to rout failure. He broke on a 4(-2) FPF (I would have taken the shot too!) and then had no choice but to rout to T8 building (closest, no closer to known enemy units.) If it wasn't for the smoke I could have continued upstairs when the Russian revealed himself, but lacking the MF I was captured. I set myself up for some nice advancing fire shots but only broke one Russian. Then to my surprise Tom self-breaks the other squad and all of a sudden the east side of the board looks like the way to go. I'm not sure that I would have done that, but I guess Tom was concerned about these guys getting cut off. Because of my pinned squads in W7, I can't advance enough manpower into V6 to get more than 1:1 CC odds. So I'll surround this guy with multiple units and hope he breaks and surrenders next turn. I'm in position to interdict some Russian movement next turn, but some Russians will be able to move freely. Regarding my progress and requisite 4.1 hexes per turn: Only the HS in U7 has moved 8 hexes from my start line, thus adding to this nagging feeling that although I'm pushing hard and taking chances, I'm still coming up short in the progress department.

Post-Game Comment From John - Aargh! Looking this over after we finished, I noticed that I could have Low Crawled [A10.52] that broken squad from V7 to U8 and avoided being captured in T8. The squad was required to rout toward T8 since there was no other legal rout destination and he could make it to T8 using his 6 MF, but he still had the option of using Low Crawl as he routed toward T8. Dagnabbit. The relevant Q&A is: A10.51 If a DM broken unit that must rout is within six MF of the nearest woods/-building, must it attempt to reach the woods/-building in a single RPh? A. Yes, unless it uses Low Crawl, but it need not take the shortest route (in hexes/-MF) to do so. Even if it uses Low Crawl, however, it must still do so toward that woods/-building (i.e., at no time may it increase the hex range between itself and that

woods/-building, and must end that RPh closer to it than it was at the start of the phase). [An92; An95w; An96]

Russian Post-Turn Comments

Not a bad turn at all. One Finnish squad dead, one captured, a few more pinned, and a very studly stand in V6. More importantly, we held the line that we wanted to hold - the only Finnish unit that got farther than we wanted was the halvesquad in V7.

The captured squad is a big deal for two reasons. First, it's worth double Exit VP [A20.1] if I can exit it off the south end of the map. Second, since Guard units can Deploy regardless of whether their nationality is normally allowed to Deploy [A20.5], I can create a steady stream of 237 halvesquads to block the Finnish advance with their bodies. 237's aren't powerful, but their morale is just as high as a 447 squad. Two halvesquads can be better than one squad because it takes two MC failures to break them instead of one for the squad. Nice.

It probably wasn't real necessary to self-break that squad in W10 since he probably could have positioned himself nicely for next turn by moving V10 (bypass V9), U10 (bypass V9/U9) and then T9, but I thought he'd have more options if he got rallied by the Commissar and started the MPH in T9. Plus it's cool to see Der Commissar magically bring them brokies back from the dead - and not a little disheartening for the Finnish player. This is assuming I can roll a 9 or less for both brokies in the R2 RPh.

I liked John's advances - that's the kind of aggressiveness he needs to show. The guy in X3 should perhaps have gone to W4 instead of W3, just to get a better LOS down the street to Q1 and keep me from repositioning my boys on the western side of the map in toward the center. V6 did not need to be CC'd; he's going to go down in the upcoming Defensive Fire Phase regardless of what he manages to do in Prep Fire. Good players use their DFPh to break enemy units and open up holes for their upcoming MPH.

There really isn't any good defensive terrain left in the immediate area, so next turn will focus on falling back to the next defensive line centered around the R-row rowhouses. We'll give the Finns a relatively free advance of several hexes but make sure we can hit 'em with PBF if they should get overly zealous and try to move into the S street. During Finn turn 3, they'll probably move up to the farthest cover they can find (the R9-R8-S8-T7-T6-U4-U2-T1 line) and then advance into the street, so I need to be ready to respond to this, probably falling back farther during Russian turn 3 instead of skulking one hex and making a defensive stand along the R hexrow.

Time to make sure I can get out of Finnish LOS and grow concealment, while being able to stay a step ahead of the advancing Finns. The southern half of the board is quite different than the northern half, so I need to defend it differently. The central graveyard is virtually impossible to defend with 447's on the ground, so I'll leave it empty and let the HIP MMG in K4L2 cover it from above. Meanwhile, the 447's will continue the kind of defense we've already seen along the eastern and western board edges.

Board status at end of Finnish turn 2.
T9 contains a 447/(1)06, ?9-0, dm447/LMG, dm447.



Russian Turn 2

Rally Phase (RPh)

1. Wind Change DR = 1,1 possible change Subsequent dr = 6, force decreases 1 level - we now have No Wind.

By A24.61, the grey Drifting Smoke counters go away immediately.

2. First MMC rally attempt is a self-rally in T4 DR = 3,4 no, remove DM

3. Commissar rallies broken squads in T9. Since no Finnish units are in LOS, he doesn't lose concealment.

447/LMG DR = 1,4 yes, with the Commissar's effect of negating DM and raising the morale level of the unit.
447 DR = 2,1 yes

4. Finn HS self-rallies in AA8 DR = 2,4 no, remove DM

5. Guard 447 in T9 Deploys into two 237 halvesquads and then transfers the Guards to the newly-rallied 447.

Note that A20.5 indicates that such transfer does not affect either the new or old Guard's RPh capabilities, so Tom argues that this does not violate the principle of a unit only being able to do one thing in the RPh [A3.1]. Others will disagree, saying that a unit must be Good Order (ie, unbroken) in order to take part in a SW exchange [A4.431], so it should be unbroken in order to participate in a Prisoner exchange. Shrug. Fixing it up so that the rest of this XOP goes according to plan would require some major leaps of faith, so we'll just claim A.2 and move on.

Tom:

AAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRGGGGGGGGGHHHHHH!!!!

No Wind! My Smoke! Where's my lovely Smoke!

That's a Big Deal, folks. If this were a face-to-face game, I'd tell John to go take a bathroom break while I thought this out. The Wind dying out really changes things for two reasons:

- The Blazes will spread much less rapidly because there will be no +2 Wind DRM to the Spreading Fire DR. Normally I could count on the Blaze on the south end of the map spreading to the G5 and E6 buildings, severely hampering the Finnish advance in the end game, but now it's likely to be wide open.
- The lack of Drifting Smoke will provide me with much less cover to hide behind this turn and will allow the Finns to penetrate the T6-T8 line without having to spend an extra MF per Smoke hex. Suddenly it's become much harder to stay one step ahead of him during this Fighting Withdrawal, and if he catches up to me, his firepower and numerical advantages will turn the tide.

Well, hell. What can we do. Guess it comes down to two options:

- Use the troops in T9 to put up a Wall of Bodies in U10, U9, T8, S8, with the Commissar back in S10. Even if the Finns don't break them next turn, they'd self-break and rout back to the Commissar, who would rally them in the R3 RPh for repositioning back to the next defensive line around O10/P8.
- Fall Back to the O10/P7 defensive line, ceding the T8 area to the Finns on turn 3 and preparing to defend the open ground area from P10 to R7 on turn 4.

I kind of like the Wall of Bodies idea partly because John seems to have been frustrated by the slow progress he's made so far, and

it'd be nice to capitalize on that. It's also pretty effective. But what bothers me is the prospect of falling back from the S10 rally point during Russian turn 3, once my Wall of Bodies guys got rallied by the Commissar. I worry that Finns in S6/S7/T6 would have LOS to the Q10/P9/P10 hexes that I'd have to fall back through, and I DON'T want to get shot up as I fall back. Also, if I go with the Wall of Bodies, John might accuse me of approaching this Example of Play as if it were only 3 turns long instead of the full 7, so I'll continue to fall back like I originally planned.

However, now that I have the Prisoners, I can create some halvesquads who could serve very well in a delaying role. Kind of like a Wall of Bodies, except the Commissar won't be waiting in the backfield to receive broken units in her open arms.

Prep Fire (PFPh)

1. V6 at U7

8(+0) DR = 2,5 1MC

1MC vs 248 DR = 2,5 Pins, Russian SAN

Russian sniper dr = 6, sleepin'

Movement Phase (MPH)

1. ?, 447 in U2 moves

a. T1 - 2

b. S1 - 4

2. V1 assault moves U1 - 1 (No Finns have LOS to U1, so this move does not cause loss of Concealment)

3. S4 assault moves R4 - 2

4. 9-0, 447/106, 447/LMG in T9 move

a. S10, bypass S10/S9, S10/R9 - 1

b. R9, bypass R9/R10 - 2

c. Q10 - 3

d. P9 - 4

e. O9 - 5

5. S8 moves

a. S9 - 2

b. T9 - 4

Defensive Fire Phase (DFPh)

1. U7 at V6 2(+2) DR = 5,4 NE

2. V5, W5, W6, W7 (no LMG) all firegroup at V6
36(+1) (heroic -1 DRM)

DR = 5,4 2MC, V6 is Encircled [A7.7]

2MC vs 447 DR = 1,6 breaks, DM

Advancing Fire Phase (AFPh)

1. Spreading Fire:

F2L0 from F2L1: 2,6 no

T4L0 from T5L0: 5,1 no

T5L1 from T5L0: 2,2 no

2. Flame to Blaze spread:

G3: 6,2 Blazes

F2L0: 2,5 no

T4L0: 1,6 no

T5L1 (first flame) 1,4 no (second flame) 4,6 Blazes

Rout Phase (RtPh)

Russian Routs

1. Squad in V6 surrenders to squad in W7, which immediately deploys into two 248 HS's.
2. Squad in X2L1 surrenders to squad in X2L0.

Advance Phase (APh)

1. 237 in T9 to U10
2. 237 in T9 to U9
3. ?447 in T9 to T8
4. O9 to O10
5. R4 to R5 (bypassing via the Q row so as to not lose concealment, B23.71)
6. S1 to R0 (retaining concealment because no Finns have LOS to R0)
7. ?, ? in U1 to U2
8. ?, 447 in U1 to T1

Close Combat Phase (CCPh)

1. Conceal all units in O10 and U10

Finnish Post-Turn Comments

Holy Wind Change DR batman! Stopping the wind is a big event but I'm not sure whom it helps more. It makes movement faster (no +1 MF for entering a smoked location), but more dangerous for both sides (-2 for FFMO and FFNAM.) I have to admit that I was thinking of using the smoke on turn 3 to cover my advance, but now it's gone. At least now I have some better shots at the retreating Russians. During the last advance phase I was going to advance the 648/MMG in X7 to X7L1, but decided against it because of all the smoke. Other than that the turn goes as expected. V6 breaks and surrenders, as does the squad in X2L1. Tom skulks again, and the units in R5 can make my life really painful next turn. I wanted to force the issue along the T6-Z9 wall, but those guys can see right down the road.

Russian Post-Turn Comments

Whew. Lotta scrambling around, at least mentally, during this turn. I'm glad this isn't for AREA points!

Caught between the Fall Back and Wall of Bodies ideas, I chose a middle ground. Not sure if that's Good Compromise or Fatal Indecisiveness; time will tell. Without the Smoke out there to slow down the Finns, I need to buy as much time as possible, so those two squad-equivalents in U10/U9/T8 seem worth it. If (when?) they break next turn, they'll try to rout back to R8/R9/S10, denying the Finns the use of these hexes during the Finnish turn 4 and channeling the attack through the open ground of R7. Might work out.

Defensive assignments for the upcoming turn:

- U10 covers V8 and blocks the eastern board edge with his body.
- U9 covers the road in front of him and blocks with his body
- T8 covers S7, T7, U8
- O10 and P8 cover S7. O10 fires first; P8 drops HIP and fires only as a last resort
- R5 covers S5, S6, and T6
- T4 blocks with his body
- T1 covers T2 and T3
- R0 covers U5 on his first shot and T3 with his SFF shot

I think the best Finnish attack this turn is to keep up the pressure and crack the defense. Probably aim toward S3 with the western half of his forces. In the east, try to break T8 with prep from W8/W9 and then flood through U7/T7/S8. Neither option is particularly fancy, but the Russians are losing manpower quickly

and one more aggressive turn could easily break every Russian squad north of the R hexrow. After that, the Russians will be down to the 9-0's and 7-0's stacks and the two HIP squads - still able to delay the Finns a bit, but not nearly to the extent we saw on turns 1-3. With a tremendous numerical superiority over turns 4-7, the Finns would stand a good chance of winning the game by simply sprinting down the map, taking whatever losses the Russians could inflict but shrugging them off.

Finn Turn 3

Rally Phase (RPh)

1. Wind Change DR = 2,4 no
2. Finn broken HS in AA8 self-rallies DR = 3,3 rallies

Prep Fire Phase (PFPh) - none

Movement Phase (MPH)

1. 248 in U7 moves
 - a. T6 - 1
 - b. S6 - 2

Tom: Crap. This is the kind of Finnish attack I've been fearing - aggressive probing with halvesquads. I don't want to waste valuable bullets on piddly halvesquads, but if I let this guy get behind me, it's going to be very hard to withdraw from R5. Sigh. Let's see if T8 can take him down so that R5 can fire somewhere else.

- c. 447 in T8 loses concealment and fires
4(-2) DR = 1,5 1MC, 2 RFP
1MC vs 248 DR = 2,3 passes

Tom: Ergh. Well, nothing for it but to fire R5. Maybe I'll KIA the halvesquad and be free to Subsequent First Fire at some other target. At the very least, I'm laying some nice resid (small comfort, though).

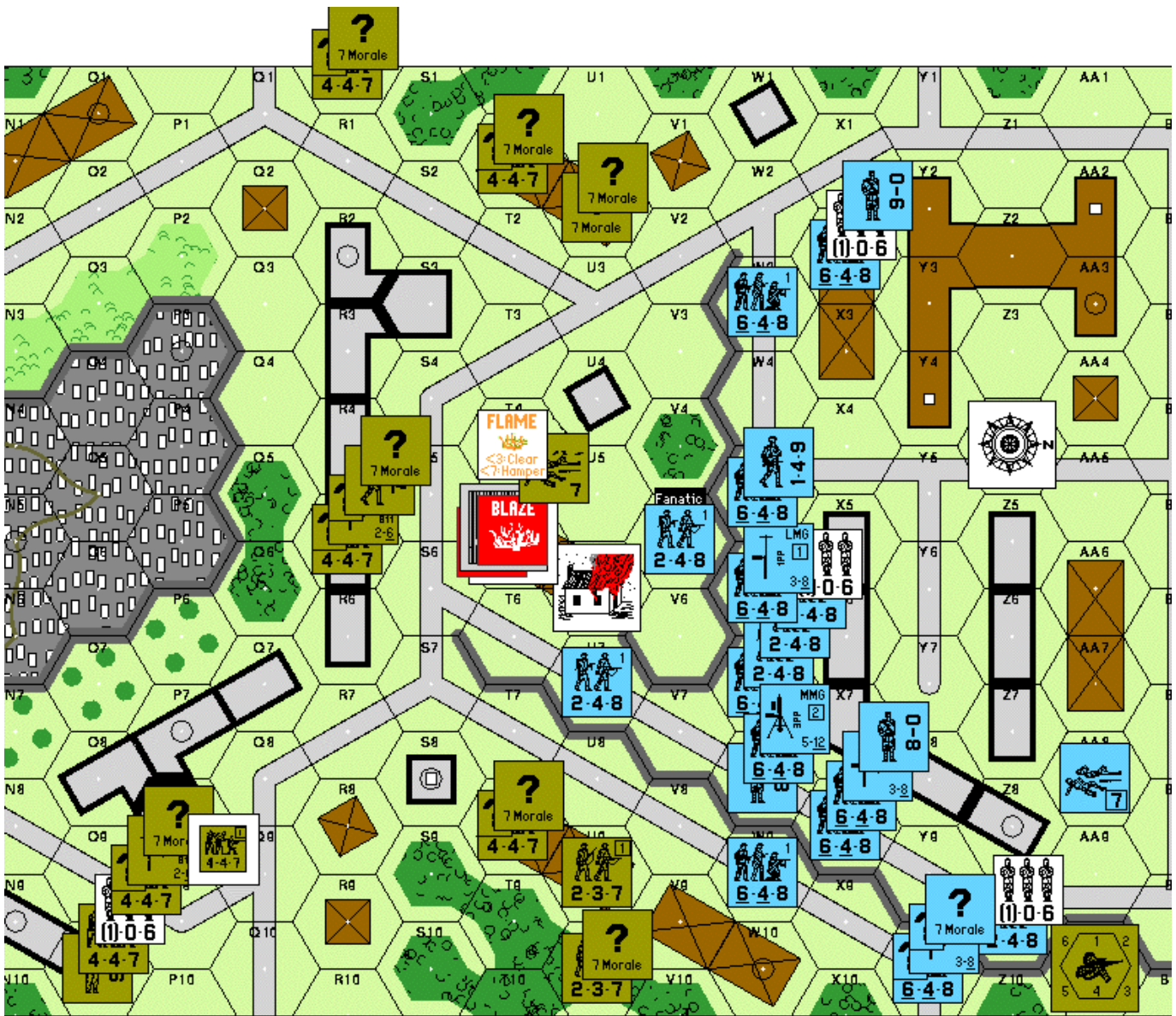
- d. 7-0, 447/LMG in R5 drop concealment and fire
12(-2) DR = 2,6 2MC, 6 RFP replaces the previous 2 RFP [A8.21]
2MC vs 248 DR = 2,4 Pins

Tom: Crap. This guy soaked up some good dfire and I didn't even break him. Worse, now R5 is now limited to 1-hex-range SFF shots because the closest known enemy unit is adjacent in S6. John will probably throw a sacrificial unit at T8 in order to limit its SFF range to 1 hex, then pour units through the T6-S7 gap. O10 will fire on S7, but if that doesn't work, P8 will have to drop HIP and do so. We can't let anybody make it to the Q7/R6/S8 if we can help it; if they do, it's really gonna make it hard to fall back from R5, T8, U9, and U10.

Lot going on here, and we've just had one halvesquad move two hexes. That's ASL, baby! None of this "You move, I sleep" stuff. When you're moving, I'm reacting!

2. fanatic HS in V5 moves
 - a. U5 - 1, DM'ing the broken Russian in T4

Board status at end of Russian turn 2.



Tom: Just realized that it'd be fruitless for R0 to Long Range Fire at U5 - the LOS is clear and it's a nice sneaky shot, but the resulting 1 RFP wouldn't do much to channel the Finnish attack - John would just use bypass movement in V4/U4. So R0 will hold his fire.

- b. U4, 3
- c. T3 - 4
- d. R0 drops concealment and fires
- 4(-2) DR = 1,4 2MC, 2 RFP
- 2MC vs f248 DR = 2,4 OK

e. Declare late CX, enter S4 for 5 MF

- 3. X2 moves
- a. X1 - 1
- b. W1 - 3
- c. V0 - 5

- 4. W3 dashes
- a. W2 - 1
- b. V1 - 3

- 5. 648, 149 in W5 move
- a. V4, bypass V4/V5 and V4/U5 - 2
- b. U4 - 4

- 6. 648/LMG in W6 moves
- a. V5 - 2
- b. V4 - 4

- 7. 248 in W7 Double Times
- a. V7 - 1
- b. U7 - 2
- c. T6 - 3
- d. S7 - 5
- e. 9-0, 447/LMG in O10 fire
- 4(-2) DR = 1,4 2MC, ROF on LMG, so 1 RFP from the squad's firepower
- 2MC vs 248 DR = 5,2 breaks, Russian SAN
- Sniper activation dr = 6, no

- 8. 648 in W9 moves
- a. V9 - 2
- b. U10 - 4, stripping U10's concealment and bumping the 648 back to V9 [A12.15]. U10 does not fire.

- 9. 248/106 in W7 moves
- a. W6 - 1
- b. W5 - 2
- c. W4 - 3

- 10. Y10 moves
- a. X10, bypass X10/X9, X10/W10 - 1
- b. W10, bypass W10/W11 - 2
- c. V10 - 4

- 11. 648/MMG in W8 moves
- a. V7 - 1
- b. U7 - 2
- c. T6 - 3

- 12. 648 in W7 moves
- a. V7 - 1
- b. U7 - 2
- c. T6 - 3

- 13. 248 in W7 moves
- a. V7 - 1
- b. U7 - 2

- 14. 248/106 in Z9 move
- a. Y9 - 1
- b. X8 - 2
- c. W8 - 3
- d. V7 - 4
- e. U7 - 5 (with road bonus, B3.4)

- 15. 648 in X8 Dashes
- a. X9 - 2
- b. W10 - 4

- 16. 8-0 in X8 Dashes
- a. X9 - 2
- b. W10 - 4

- 17. 648/LMG in X8 moves
- a. W8 - 1
- b. V7 - 2
- c. U7 - 3
- d. T6 - 4

- 18. 248 in AA8 Double Times
- a. Z8, bypass Z9 - 1
- b. Y9 - 2
- c. X9 - 4
- d. W9 - 5
- e. V8 - 6

Defensive Fire Phase (DFPh)

1. R5 final fires at S6 (the only unit he can final fire at)
6(+0) DR = 2,6 worthless PTC. Since the unit is already Pinned, the only game result from taking this PTC DR would be a Sniper activation, so the DR is not made [A14.1].

2. LMG in O10 retained ROF, so it Final Fires at S7 with full FP
2(+0) DR = 6,4 no

3. U9 and U10 firegroup at V10
6(+1) DR = 4,4 cowers to 4 column, misses.

Advancing Fire Phase (AFPh)

1. T6 (no MG's) at R5
12(+3) DR = 5,6 no

2. V10 at U10
8(+1) DR = 4,5 no

3. V9 at U9
6(+2) DR = 2,1 1MC
1MC vs 237 DR = 5,3 breaks, DM

4. V8 at U10
1(+2) DR = 6,3 no

5. W10 at U10
4(+1) DR = 2,1 1MC
1MC vs 237 DR = 3,6 breaks, DM

6. U7 at T8 2(+2) DR = 4,6 no

7. V0 and V1 at U2

6(+2) DR = 1,6 miss, Russian SAN
 Sniper activation dr = 1, hot Scatter direction = 2, distance = 6
 Moves Russian sniper from AA10 to GG7. Nearest Finn units in 0 TEM are in W4 and W8; Russian chooses to KIA the 8-0 in W8.

8. U4, V4 (no LMG), and W4 at U2
 6(+1) DR = 3,5 miss

9. Spreading Fire DR's:
 F2L0 DR = 3,4 no
 T4L0 DR = 3,4 no
 T4L1 from T5L1 DR = 2,2 no
 G4L0 from G3: DR = 1,2 no

10. Flame to Blaze spread:
 F2L0 (first flame): DR = 1,2 no (second flame) DR = 3,1 no
 T4L0: DR = 4,1 no

Rout Phase (RtPh)

Finnish Routs

1. S7 Low Crawls to T6 - 3 MF

Russian Routs

1. U9 to T9, S10, R9
 2. U10 to T10, S10
 3. T4L0 to T4L1, T4L2

Advance Phase (APh)

1. S4 to R4
 2. 648 in T6 to S6
 3. 648/LMG in T6 to S7
 4. 648/MMG in T6 to T7
 5. U7 to T6
 6. V8 to U8
 7. V9 to U9
 8. V10 to U10
 9. W10 to V9
 10. 149 in U4 to U3
 11. 648 in U4 to T3
 12. W4 to V3
 13. V4 to V3
 14. V0 to U1
 15. V1 to U2

Close Combat Phase (CCPh)

1. Reveal Russian dummies in U2 before the Ambush dr [A11.19]
 2. Automatic concealment gain in R4 and V9.
 3. V3 rolls for concealment: 648/LMG dr = 6, no 248/106 dr = 4, yes (with -1 stealthy drm)

Finnish Post-Turn Comments

A good turn for the good guys! I start off by running a HS at Tom's units in R5, trying to restrict their fire so that my other units can move reasonably freely. Worked out pretty well and I only suffer a break and a pin this turn. Good advancing fire again too and the east side of the board opens up even more. But the most important thing about this turn is my positioning for the Russian turn 3 defensive fire. With the current unit disposition I can now hit each and every Russian unit, except the stack in O10, even if they try to skulk. Most notable is that the 648/LMG in V3 has a nice line of fire down the Q1/U3 road, effectively pinning the Russians along the west board edge. With the Russians

pinned along the west board edge, and a lot of Russian brokies along the east edge, I sense a Finn breakout is near.

Russian Post-Turn Comments

Well, not as bad as I thought it could be, at least after the opening two moves with the probing Finnish halvesquads. Laying that resid in S7 (and retaining ROF on the LMG in O10) must have made John settle for a safer course. Fine with me; R5 stands a reasonable chance of falling back in good order and I didn't need to reveal the HIP unit in P8.

It took a lot of lateral movement, but it was smart for John to reposition some of his attack toward the western board edge. Sending everybody down the eastern half of the board just makes it easier for individual squads and halvesquads to delay the entire attack with well-placed resid. Now that he's able to push along the entire 10-hex front, John should find some gaps in the defense much more easily.

It helps, of course, that I'm being rapidly whittled away to nothing. I think the half-measured defense I put up around U9 turned out to be a waste of two much-needed squad-equivalents. Sure, they delayed the eastern edge attack for a turn and will be able to channel the Finnish attack on turn 4 by blocking R8, R9, and S9 with their bodies (R8 will be occupied by the 447 who's currently in T8), but overall it doesn't feel like it was worth it. Better to have completely fallen back last turn to the O10 area. If I had done the Wall of Bodies defense (MMC's in S8, T8, U9, and U10 with the Commissar back in S10 for auto-rally during R3 RPh), John's advance into S7/T7 would have made it very hard to fall back to O10 this turn. Well, I got it half-correct at least.

The dam is going to burst very soon, and there won't be any chance of my defense covering the entire width of the board. After a token stand in O10/P8 during Finnish turn 4, I'm going to run back to the goal line as fast as I can, hoping the HIP MMG team will be able to keep the Finns off Denisova's back long enough to set up a Last Stand somewhere in the south where there's a good bottleneck.

Note the effect of John's halvesquad advancing to R4 - makes it harder for me to withdraw from R5. That's what I've been talking about all along - the insidious effect of being aggressive with halvesquads. I can't shoot them all, and eventually some of them can penetrate far enough to shoot at me while I'm falling back.

Russian Turn 3

Rally Phase (RPh)

1. Wind Change DR = 6,4 no
2. MMC self-rally in R9 DR = 5,6 no
3. Finn HS in T6 self-rallies DR = 3,6 no
4. Remove DM's except for T6, who opts to remain DM since he is not in a woods/building/pillbox [A10.62]

Prep Fire Phase (PFPh)

1. O10 at S7
6(+0) DR = 1,3 2MC, ROF on the LMG
2MC vs 648/LMG DR = 3,2 OK

LMG ROF's at S7

2(+0) DR = 5,5 breaks LMG since his B# is reduced to 10 because of the Ammo Shortage [A19.131]

2. R0 at T3
4(+0) DR = 4,6 no

Tom: A rarity for the Russians - Prep firing. O10 felt free to do so because they're gonna make a defensive stand there during Finnish turn 4, and they felt like they could stand up to the 6(+3) return shot from S7 since they've got the Commissar there to raise the squads' morale to 8.

R0 originally wanted to dash to Q2 or R2, but the beefy Finnish firepower in U3/V3 makes this a bad idea. Turned out to be safer to sit there and prep fire at T3 since T3 is the only Finnish unit with LOS to R0. I'd rather be falling back with this guy, but the odds of getting shot down in the street are just too high.

Movement Phase (MPH)

1. T8 assault moves S9
2. T1 assault moves S1
3. R5 Double Times
 - a. Q6, bypass 3 hexsides (R6, Q7, and P6) for 2 MF - 2
 - b. P5 - 4
 - c. O5 - 5
 - d. N4 - 6
 - e. M4 - 7
 - f. L3 - 8

Defensive Fire Phase (DFPh)

1. T7 at S9
4(+1) DR = 4,1 NMC
NMC vs 447 DR = 2,6 breaks, DM
2. U9 at S9
6(+1) DR = 3,4 worthless PTC, Russian SAN Sniper activation dr = 1, hot Scatter direction = 3, distance = 2 Moves Russian sniper from W8 to Y9, thence to V9. Random selection in V9: 8-0 dr = 1 648 dr = 4 breaks squad (DM)
3. U1 at S1
2(+1) DR = 6,4 no
4. T3 at S1
2(+1) DR = 1,5 no
5. S7 and T6 at O10
8(+3) DR = 5,4 no

Advancing Fire Phase (AFPh)

1. Spreading Fire DR's:
F2L0 from G2 DR = 3,6 yes, add a third (!) flame
G4L0 from G3 DR = 6,6 yes
T4L0 from T5L0 DR = 6,4 add another flame
T4L1 from T5L1 DR = 3,2 no

2. Flame to blaze spread
F2L0 (two old Flames, so two DR's) DR = 3,2 and 1,5 neither successful
T4L0 DR = 4,2 no

Rout Phase (RtPh)

- Russian Rout
1. S9 to R8

Finnish Rout

1. T6 to S6, R5

Advance Phase (APh)

1. L3 to K4L0

Close Combat Phase (CCPh)

1. Conceal K4L0

Finnish Post-Turn Comments

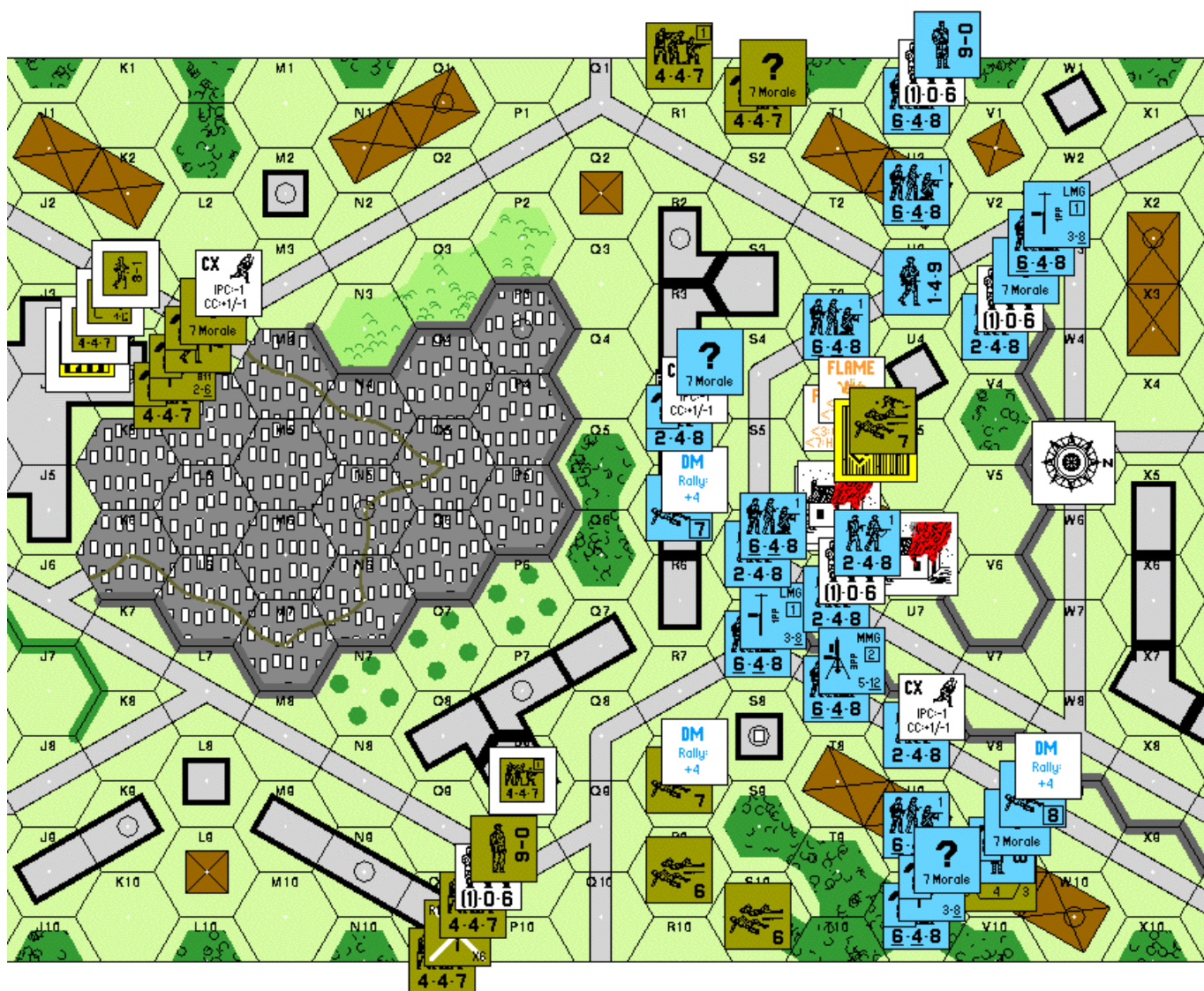
What was I saying about good defensive fire opportunities? Tom executes a very nice move with his R5 stack, and extricates those units out of harm's way. My DF breaks the last remaining good order Russian in the S9 area, and now I feel pretty good about the upcoming (hypothetical) turns.

Before I see Tom's actual setup and comments, let me just wrap up with a few comments about my progress thus far, and try to predict what would happen in subsequent turns. The middle of the board is quite open now, and that's where I would continue my assault. The central graveyard is wonderful terrain to move through, costing only 1 MF, but with a +1 TEM. That means I can move as quickly through a graveyard as I can in the open, but without the FFMO that I've been hammered with so far. So in the next turn all my central guys CX and head for the graveyard. My eastern guys mop up the Russians in the S9 area, taking them prisoner, and continue along the eastern edge.

I suspect now that Tom's HIP MMG is setup to cover the graveyard. Perhaps in K4L1. This is a pretty good location that can cover a large chunk of the board. My farthest unit in R4 has moved 11 hexes in 3 turns which is not as far as I like. However, as I said above, the middle of the board is fairly open right now, and double-timing along with the graveyard will help my progress in the next two turns. As a final note, let's look at the CVP. By my count, Tom has 20 exit CVP on board, counting the prisoners double, and including his HIP units. I've disregarded the Russian in T4L2, since the blaze will prevent him from exiting the board. The Finns have roughly 42 exit CVP, again counting the prisoners double, and assuming that I capture the brokies along the east edge. Now of course I don't expect all units on either side to exit, but these rough numbers indicate that the Finns have a sizeable advantage in points. I believe that the Finns have a slight edge here, and about a 55% chance of victory given the current disposition.

Nice game Tom, now where are your HIP guys?!?!?

Ground and second-level units in K4 have been separated into two stacks for clarity; the second-level units are HIP.



Tom: HIP guys? I get HIP guys? :-)

Russian Post-Turn Comments

Fun to see John's frustration at not even getting a shot off when R5 retreated. Gotta love it.

Well, we managed to do what we wanted to do this turn; now we just need to see if it's gonna be good enough. We accepted the inevitable break of the 447 in T8 and used him to establish a wall of broken bodies in R8, R9, and S10. During Finnish turn 4, these broken-but-still-effective guys will channel the Finnish attack through R6 and R7, where we'll put down some resid from P8 and O10.

Out West, those two squads in R0/S1 are managing to make pests of themselves. The Finns don't have enough firepower to rely on breaking them in prep fire, so they're looking forward to laying enough residual in S2/S3 to force the Finns to take the longer (2 MF) route through the rowhouses if they want to head south. R0 also has an interesting LOS to Q4 that he'd like to try out.

During the next turn, I expect the Finns to flood through the R3-R6 rowhouse and enter the cemetery. The HIP MMG in K4L2 will definitely make his debut; let's hope it's a good one. The broken units on the eastern edge of the map (and the soon-to-be-broken units on the western edge) are sure to be captured, so the Finns won't have any problem mustering enough Exit VP to win - IF they can manage to get off the board. With 4 turns to move approximately 19 hexes (hexrow R to offboard), the Finns have to really push from here on out. They've got the overwhelming numerical superiority to do so now, but they're about to find both Russian HIP units, which could cramp their style, and all three remaining Russian stacks (K4L0, K4L2, and O10) are leader-led and have good chances of staying one step ahead of the Finns. Although I'd give the Finns a 60-65% chance to win at this point, it's still anybody's ballgame.

Conclusion - Both players comment after having read each other's during-game commentary.

Finnish Comments

Now that I've had the chance to review the entire XOP, including Tom's comments and HIP setup, and I'll make some concluding remarks. I considered putting some MG overwatch people in that level 2 location that Tom mentioned, but I didn't want to complicate my manpower situation, since I really needed to move aggressively. I would have lost a full-squad equivalent to man these MGs, manpower which I wanted upfront. And I really wanted to use my HS to probe the defense aggressively, and not man MGs. I could have put a full squad up there, and deployed him on turn 1, but it just didn't sit right with me.

Tom's HIP placement is well thought-out. I'm glad that I guessed right about the K4 upper level position for the MMG, although I think that L1 is better than L2, since it allows for skulking downstairs as an AM, even with the PIG MG. The P8 position would probably have surprised me, especially since my next move with my T7 unit would be S7, heading for R6. P8 covers a lot of ground, but he can be easily bypassed, again at the expense of some added MF. I was actually expecting this guy to be hidden closer to the exit board edge.

60 to 65% in favor of the Finns?! Yikes! Don't think my situation is that good, especially since I will be eating some -1 shots in the graveyard from the K4L2 HIPsters. The Russians have lost

significant manpower, but they have delayed my progress significantly. I think 60-65% is a little high and I'll stick by my 55% prediction. That's the great thing about not playing any further: we can predict whatever we want! (Tom, next turn I predict that I'll generate 3 more heroes too.)

I should say a word about the Finn leaders. Unlike the Russians, and other nationalities, the Finns don't have to be as conservative with their leaders. Finn MMCs can self rally and deploy without leaders, so all the leaders add is some more MF. I really should have tried to take advantage of that more, and in subsequent turns I'd be trying to match up my leaders with MMCs so that I can get 8 MF while CXing. I suppose they could also be used aggressively like the probing HSs, but then I'd miss out on their added MF.

My play wasn't stellar, but competent, especially for a first playing of this scenario. At times I felt like I was just moving without any clear immediate objectives in mind, but this scenario calls for aggressive moving down the board. Hopefully another playing of this scenario would be a little better, but we'll take what we learned tactics-wise and put them on file in case they're needed in other scenarios. (You should do this for every playing.) Tom's defense was solid and well thought-out. We have some differences of opinion on the AA10 placement, but I can't fault him for the MMG HIP placement. Maybe not what I would have done initially, but definitely with its merits. Tom's defensive withdrawal was executed fairly well, with foresight that gave each defending unit an assignment for the next Finn MPh/DFPh phase.

Russian Comments

It's always interesting to me to see how two players view the same game differently. All through this game, John and I have been worrying about things that the other guy was relatively oblivious to. John was worried about my HIP MMG and didn't give a rat's butt about my efforts to channel the attack using broken bodies. I was worried about aggressive probing by Finnish halvesquads but felt like I rarely saw it, while John thought he was doing exactly that. We both agonized when the Smoke went away, figuring it'd help the other guy more.

Ah well. The proof, as they say, is in the pudding, and ultimately each of us has to see how the game turns out and think about whether we were too worried about the wrong things and not worried enough about the right things. That's how you get better, by re-evaluating the way you see the game and being open to other people's interpretations.

John's right - K4L1 is better than K4L2 since both spots can see over any wall/graveyard hexes. No need to be up higher than necessary - just makes it harder to retreat.

His counting of the Exit VP's is nice, but I had planned on not allowing any Finns to escape, hoping to win by an Exit VP count of 0-0. Without any Smoke to slow the Finns down, though, it's gonna be hard. Interesting to see that we both had a similar assessment of the Finn's victory chances. Against a more cautious player, the appearance of the Russian MMG might slow down the Finnish attack significantly, but John apparently is expecting the MMG to show up in K4 soon, so it doesn't look like I'm gonna be able to shock and surprise him into slowing down. Nerts.

About AA10, shrug. He does look a bit exposed in retrospect, doesn't he? Lemme try to defend his placement. John's initial 8-flat shot had a 60% chance of breaking that squad, which I'll translate into a 40% chance of having that squad survive the shot.

At that point, John would face the decision about how many of the squads in CC10 to prep fire at AA10. Certainly two, possibly three, but at the very least the guy in AA10 would be soaking up prep fire from squads that would be better off moving. John's right, this guy was prisoner-fodder from the get-go, but I should have probably made it more clear from the start that I wasn't planning on letting any Finns escape off the southern board edge, so it didn't matter to me how many prisoners John took. Instead of worrying too much about the fate of my broken units, all along I was trying to use them to channel the Finnish attack into open ground hexes that I could cover with a small number of units. Is this a good idea? Well, I thought so, but it pretty much forces the Russian player to keep the Exit VP score at 0-0 or something close to it. Given the Wind Change that made the Drifting Smoke go away and significantly hindered the spread of the Blaze from G2, it does look like it'd be hard to keep the Finns from exiting more VP than that.

Blaming the Fates (specifically, the Wind Change DR) for my less-than-even chances of winning the game? Shrug. Sure, a bit. I think the Russian needs to count on the Drifting Smoke slowing down the Finns for a turn here and channeling their attack around the rapidly-spreading G3 Blaze. Without it, the game changes significantly. Now, shifting over from Whining Booby mode to Proactive Healthy mode, perhaps I should have realized more fully that the basic nature of the scenario had significantly changed once the Wind died out; I should have shifted over to a more force-conservative strategy, trying to keep more bodies around to get more exit VP off the map than the Finns. OK, I can see that; you gotta be flexible and respond to situations like that when they come up. If you're playing a scenario where it's raining but the rain stops, you better realize that you can now lay Smoke and start playing accordingly, cuz it's a sure bet your opponent will see it.

A good game well-played by John. He and I don't always agree on what the Right Thing To Do is, but like I said above, that's what I like about playing him and guys like him. They challenge you to rethink your game and become a stronger player in the process. I can see I've still got a ways to go :-)

And that's it, folks. I'd like to thank John for providing such good and detailed commentary. Hopefully there's enough in here to give the new player insights into what more experienced players are thinking while the game is going on. As always, we love to hear feedback and questions - it shows you're thinking about the game and trying to get better.